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THE ENEMY'S CAMP

CHAPTER XXXIV

DURING Talbot's parting words with Cicely and her uncle an astonished face was gazing at them from the stile in the osier-bed,—the face of Charles, who had just come to relieve Mr. Lauriston of his watch and had found the post deserted. He reached the stile in time to see the farewell, and was still standing dumb-struck when Talbot turned towards him. The countenance of the arch-criminal was serene and he seemed no whit abashed at the sight of the man he had wronged. "Congratulate me, old fellow," he said when he got nearer ; "I'm going to be married."

"Married ?" repeated Charles mechanically, surveying his own raiment with languid interest. The sight of Talbot in amicable converse with his ally, and apparently with the vision of yesterday, had come as something of a shock. "In my clothes ?" he added with a faint curiosity.

"Oh, I borrowed them, didn't I?" Talbot conceded. "I forgot to tell you. Of course you haven't paid your tailor yet. Tell him to send the bill to me, old man." Therewith he swept the subject magnificently aside and returned to the more important matter. "Man, I could move mountains!" he exclaimed. "I've been accepted. Have you ever been in love ? But no, how should you ? No one has ever been in love except myself."

Talbot looked so confident that Charles did not dispute it. "Who is the lady ?" he asked, still somewhat stunned, as they turned in the direction of the house-boat. Surprise made him oblivious of the Gladstone bag and of the fact that he now had

a good opportunity to recover it since the mystery of the clothes was cleared up.

"That was she," said Talbot; "the only one in the world."

Charles allowed this statement also to pass unchallenged. "How did it happen?" he asked, and Talbot briefly related the story, ending it as they reached the plank bridge.

Charles remained silent and thoughtful until they came to the house-boat, near which their friends were busy getting tea ready. Then he spoke magnanimously: "I'll tell you what I'll do," he said; "I'll give you the clothes as a wedding-present."

Meanwhile preparations for tea stopped abruptly. William, Majendie, and the Admiral opened their eyes wide and stared. Talbot advanced unabashed clad in neat blue serge, brown boots, and Panama hat while Charles walked at his side apparently in a state of acquiescence.

"Ahem," said Majendie, adjusting his eye-glasses.

"Dear me," observed the Admiral, "*quantum mutatus ab illo.* Talbot surveyed them coolly, and decided that any attempts at inopportune wit must be checked. "How is the patient to-day?" he said pleasantly to Majendie. "You have prescribed groceries as usual? That is good," he added as the Doctor's countenance lost its possibilities of humour and lengthened in unexpected seriousness.

"I trust the pupil is diligent?" Talbot went on, turning to the Admiral. "*Non cuivis homini*—you can't paint King Charles's oak in one sitting." The Admiral for a brief moment looked like one of his own schoolboys found defective in repetition; he had no words to utter, and was conscious of Charles's suspicious eye.

Having so far cleared the path of possible unpleasantness Talbot turned to William. "Wish me joy, old man," he said.

"What about?" asked William, somewhat mystified by all that was happening."

"I'm going to be married," Talbot replied, "and the lady is coming to tea to-morrow. How are the stores? We must do it properly, iced cakes and chocolates, and things of that sort. You make me out a list, and I'll drive into Oldborough and get them this evening." Talbot was not aware how nearly his projected feast was at that moment being jeopardised by occurrences in the other camp, and he was confident in Mr.

Lauriston's power to persuade his wife. He naturally took a sanguine view of conjugal relations.

"All for one lady? Who is she?" William returned. He was hardly surprised; after the confessions made to him yesterday by Majendie and the Admiral he was prepared for shocks.

"Yes, of course, all for one lady," Talbot went on. "But there are others coming too, and a gentleman."

"Others?" questioned Majendie who had recovered himself.

"Yes, the patient is coming,—and the pupil," Talbot added, looking at the Admiral.

"Who," asked Charles, "are they?"

Talbot told him, at some length, interrupted from time to time by indignant exclamations from the Admiral and the Doctor. "It is not an engagement at all," said Mr. Crichton warmly, "and I shall be grateful if you will refrain from misconstruing a perfectly innocent friendship."

"A doctor," Majendie joined in, re-adjusting his eye-glasses, "is never safe from calumny, but I must protest against such unwarranted insinuations."

"Oh well," Talbot conceded, "if I am premature, forgive me. At any rate you won't object to entertaining them to-morrow?" And they did not object.

Then they sat down to tea. Presently Charles said in a reflective tone. "Well, it's all very nice, and everybody seems pleased, but what I want to know is, where do I come in?"

Talbot's answer displayed genuine contrition. "I'm awfully sorry, old man, but I'm afraid you don't come in anywhere," he replied; "unless you'll do so as my best man."

CHAPTER XXXV

"I NEVER heard of such a thing, never," was Mrs. Lauriston's opening observation on receipt of the intelligence. "How you can have the face to come and tell me! It's—it's—it's brazen! Don't you try to interfere, Henry; I won't hear any excuses; there aren't any. A niece of mine—after the bringing up I've given you, Miss Cicely Neave—and you come and tell

me you've been carrying on with a man who may be a counter-jumper for all I know—they do say one of Mr. Neave's sisters ran away with the butler, or was it the groom? They may do those things in society with their actresses and American heiresses for all I care, the hussies! But after I've given you a home—and there isn't a better in Ealing—and you—you go deceiving me behind my back! I wonder you dare look at me, but you'd do anything. All I can say is, after the way you've been behaving the sooner you marry your counter-jumper the better,—that's all!"

"My dear Charlotte," began Mr. Lauriston, "Mr. Talbot is—"

"I don't want to hear what Mr. Talbot is; it's the deception I care about. I'm thankful I never had any children of my own, if that's the way they behave nowadays. You'll be wanting to go about in rational dress next, I suppose, without a hat. Go away and marry him before he finds out what you're like. No, Henry, I won't hear any more. She's talked you over, a nice one, she is. I won't hear any more, and I've done with her. Why don't you speak, you chit?"

"Speak," echoed Cicely, who had turned very pale, "after what you've said about him? If I thought you knew what you were saying, Aunt Charlotte, I'd never speak to you again." Without a word more she turned abruptly away and walked very slowly, holding herself extremely erect, to a clump of trees by the river until she was out of sight.

Mrs. Lauriston choked. She had a multiplicity of emotions to express and parsimonious nature has only endowed woman with one tongue, a most regrettable economy. "She—she—she ought to have her ears boxed, the minx!" was her eventual utterance. It seemed inadequate even to herself, but it was only a prelude, and she soon made up for such comparative reticence. "Henry, you ought to thrash him, philandering after a respectably brought-up girl as if she was a housemaid. To dare to answer me back, too! I shall go back to-night—no, there isn't a train, and we can't sleep in a house without getting the rooms aired and the sheets too; you must telegraph to Martha, Mr. Lauriston, and we go back at once. I'll see to her!" she decreed in a tone that boded ill for the person in question.

But Mr. Lauriston's reply also contained something of the unexpected. "Cicely is quite right; you always want to decide

everything in a hurry, Charlotte, and you've not been at all fair to the girl."

"Fair—fair to her? I've not been fair to her, when she's trying on low intrigues with a groom or a counter-jumper or a——?"

"Mr. Talbot is certainly a gentleman," her husband put in.

"He doesn't behave like one, whatever he pretends to be. A gentleman? Pouf!"

"You are going too far, Charlotte." Mr. Lauriston waxed bolder. "When you are a little calmer I will bring her to explain to you," and he walked off after Cicely without another word.

Mrs. Lauriston felt that she could have shaken him, she really could. After they had been married all those years too! She picked up the teapot, as a substitute, and shook that, and in so doing was reminded that it was tea-time. Mrs. Lauriston was fortunate in being able to expend accumulated energies in domestic pursuits, and she forthwith began to make ready for the meal.

In the meantime Mr. Lauriston had discovered his niece, a disconsolate little figure that had abandoned dignity in favour of tears. At his approach she momentarily drew herself up, prepared for defence, but on seeing him she complained with a little sob, "How could she, how could she?"

"It will all come right," said Mr. Lauriston boldly, sitting down beside her. "Don't cry, my dear child."

"I can't ever forgive her," mourned Cicely, who refused to be comforted, perhaps from a feeling that her excellent uncle was not precisely the comforter demanded by the occasion.

"You mustn't cry," repeated Mr. Lauriston. "Suppose Mr. Talbot were to see you now."

Cicely reconsidered things. "But after what Aunt Charlotte said," she began dolefully.

"Never mind," said Mr. Lauriston; "your aunt is sometimes a little hasty, of course, but when she gets to know Mr. Talbot,—by the way, where did you first meet him?"

Cicely smiled through her tears. "You're getting quite too clever, Uncle Henry," she said; "you're an old dear." Whereat Mr. Lauriston was gratified, for it testified to his ability to grapple with the mysterious moods which agitate the feminine half of creation.

His wife, however, had no one either to comfort or blame. She was left alone with her indignation and the teapot. The one was but slightly relieved by polishing the other for the third time that day, with murmured strictures on Martin's incapacity to supply elbow-grease to silver. But when she had finished this, and was looking round for more occupation, she perceived Agatha and Doris returning together and conversing as they came in high good humour.

Their evident satisfaction with the ordering of the universe vexed Mrs. Lauriston. She called to them. "Come here, girls, and help pack. We must go back to Ealing this evening."

"This evening? But we can't!" said Agatha, aghast. Doris said nothing, but her shy smiles vanished.

Mrs. Lauriston was inwardly pleased. "This evening," she repeated; "I hope you understand."

"But whatever," began Agatha. She stopped herself with a secret sense of guilt.

"Oh, I hope nobody's ill!" exclaimed Doris.

"Ill? I wish they were, the whipper-snappers!" retorted Mrs. Lauriston. "Ill? not they. It's never the people who ought to be anything that are. Why that plumber who put all our drains into typhoid and diphtheria in the back kitchen, so that we had quite a bad smell in it in hot weather—he told me he had never known what it was to be ill. Ill, the counter-jumpers! We ought never to have stayed here a single minute after that exhibition, swimming in broad daylight, in the river too! I told your uncle, but he wouldn't listen to me, he never does, though after we've been married all these years he ought to know that I don't speak about a thing unless it's absolutely necessary; but you backed him up, so it's your fault, too. If I'd done what many wives would have done and not let myself be guided against my better judgment it would never have happened. After the way I've brought you both up, too!"

The two girls looked at each other in genuine alarm. "They're not counter-jumpers," said Agatha at last, recovering herself; "and it was all an accident."

She was under a misapprehension, not unnaturally. People were apt to confuse the heads of Mrs. Lauriston's discourse, and neither of the girls imagined that the outburst could be even remotely connected with the true offender. An ability to create

cataclysms was not credited to Cicely,—so unappreciated is merit in the family circle. Mrs. Lauriston was sensible that someone had spoken, but had no time to disentangle the self-accusation in the speech. The last word, however, proved inspiring. "Accident!" she repeated. "Accident! A nice sort of accident to happen in a respectable family. It'll be talked of all over Ealing! To think that I should have one of my sister's daughters talked about as if she ran about in tights and played football and had her photograph in the papers, like those people who get into divorce cases and dance in music-halls, and call themselves smart; I'd like to make them smart, the—the things! I'd like to talk to him, and I will when I see him. He'll know what a decent woman thinks of such conduct!"

"There's nobody to talk about it if you don't," said Agatha with some asperity. She disapproved of Mrs. Lauriston's methods of comparison, and was prepared to defend herself.

"And who else should talk about it, I should like to know?" retorted her aunt. "If nobody else knows what is respectable in these days, when everybody bets and drinks whiskey and leaves their husbands and paints themselves up to look as if they were two years old, I do. I declare if she wasn't my sister's child I wish she'd go and do the same just to pay him out. She will, too, if she goes on like that. I wish Mr. Talbot joy of her, I do indeed. And we're going back to-night, and I'm never going to let her see him again, never."

"Mr. Talbot," echoed Agatha and Doris, amazed.

"Yes, that's his name, and Mr. Lauriston would have given his consent to their being engaged, I do believe. That's her! She can do anything with men; where she learnt it I don't know—the same way as she's done now, suppose."

"Cicely engaged to Mr. Talbot?" exclaimed Agatha.

"Why he only cares about fishing and hates women," said Doris.

A brief and expressive silence followed this announcement. "Dr. Majendie told me about him," said Agatha, as Mrs. Lauriston's eye compelled explanation.

"Indeed! and, pray, who is Dr. Majendie?" Aunt Charlotte inquired.

"He rescued me from a mad cow,—it had eaten the mustard," Agatha explained rather nervously. Her aunt's calm was in some ways more awful than the storm.

"And I heard from Mr. Crichton," confessed Doris in a small voice; "he saved my sketch for me and he knew my brother at Oxford. He told me quite a lot about Mr. Talbot."

"No doubt," said Mrs. Lauriston icily. "Agatha, I presume, has heard as much also. May I ask how often you have been rescued from mad cows?"

"Dr. Majendie sometimes comes to shop for his party," Agatha replied.

"I quite understand," said Aunt Charlotte, "I quite understand." She walked slowly away.

Doris made a movement as if to follow her. "You will find the tea in the black canister in the left corner of the tent," said Mrs. Lauriston without looking round.

"Oh, Aunt Charlotte," began Agatha.

Mrs. Lauriston turned abruptly. "You have deceived me," she said coldly and then passed on.

Agatha drew back. "Oh dear," exclaimed Doris, "what have we done?"

"Bring me the black canister," said Agatha. "Uncle Henry will want his tea."

Mrs. Lauriston walked on, hardly knowing whither her steps were leading her, and half stunned as by the crash of her world falling about her ears. Suddenly she came upon Cicely and her husband. She looked at them uncomprehendingly for a moment. Then, "They have deceived me too, Henry," she said wearily, "after all I've done for them. I suppose it is my fault that everyone hides things from me; I suppose I am too hard and you all hate me."

"Oh, Auntie, you know it isn't that," Cicely sprang up and ran to her. "You know it isn't that, only we had to hide things a little wee bit, just to have something to tell. It's my fault really. Now do sit down and be nice and I'll tell you all about it, only you mustn't think we did it on purpose. We didn't." She led the strangely passive Mrs. Lauriston to her vacated corner and sat down at her feet.

Mr. Lauriston half opened his mouth to speak, but decided that after all this was a woman's affair. Also, if he had spoken there was yet another confession unmade, a confession connected with a Gladstone bag, and he feared that somewhat weighty article might perform all too effectually the office of the ultimate straw.

"Did you always want to tell everybody everything when Uncle Henry was making love to you?" asked Cicely in her most insinuating manner.

"Mr. Lauriston's family were well known to my father and mother," said Mrs. Lauriston severely.

Cicely welcomed this return to the more familiar manner. "Of course they would be, Auntie dear. But just at first, at the very first, before you were really engaged, you didn't want them to know quite all about it, did you?"

Mr. Lauriston chuckled. "We used to leave each other letters under a stone in the square-garden," he commented.

"There, Aunt Charlotte," exclaimed Cicely in triumph. "I'm sure you never told anybody about that. And I really am going to tell you," she concluded virtuously.

"Henry!" said Mrs. Lauriston, still fearing lest ideas should be planted in Cicely's head.

"You were as handsome a girl then as you are a woman now," said Mr. Lauriston gallantly; "and I remember that day when you ought to have gone to the Smythes and—"

"I remember," interrupted Aunt Charlotte.

"Oh what did you do? Uncle Henry, I'm sure it was your fault," cooed Cicely. "Why you won't tell even now," she added, as Mrs. Lauriston shook her head with a half smile.

"You see, we shall have to forgive her," said Mr. Lauriston. His wife frowned, recalled to the present.

"You must," said Cicely, "because it's all my fault."

"That hardly seems a sufficient reason," her aunt opined.

"Oh, but it is; it wasn't his at all. And it's your fault too, all of you. It was the fishing; you would all make me do things, so I said I'd fish, though I can't. Don't you see?" Mrs. Lauriston did see, but she did not yet approve. Mr. Lauriston did not and said so. "He came along just as the rod hooked a fish, and he caught it for me before I knew what was happening, and then he would have gone away altogether. You wouldn't have liked it if Uncle Henry had gone away the very first time, would you, Auntie? And besides I should never have caught any more fish, and then Agatha would have made me row about till I was all over blisters, or I should have had to use a lot of horrid paints and got my fingers all sticky and turpen-

tiney, and he never looked at me, he just thought about the fish, and you wouldn't have liked it if Uncle Henry had only been thinking about fish or bayonets or something when he oughtn't to have been thinking about anything except you, would you, Auntie? And then Uncle Henry liked the fish, and you said it saved buying so many eggs for breakfast, and so I had to get some more, and I couldn't even catch one however hard I tried, and you've got to put horrid squirming things on to hooks first, you see,—and so, and so, it wasn't really my fault, was it, Auntie dear?" She patted Mrs. Lauriston's nearest hand, looking up in innocent appeal. Mr. Lauriston chuckled again.

"You child," said Mrs. Lauriston not unkindly, "do you never think what you're doing? But this Mr.—"

Cicely hastened to interrupt. "Now you mustn't say anything against him. He was so dreadfully proper, Auntie, you can't think. He wanted to go off and tell you directly, but I couldn't let him do that; it was such fun,—you thinking me such a clever girl at fishing, I mean. It would have spoilt it all. And then, and then, after a little—it was the fishing part at first, it really was—but when—you didn't want anybody to read the letters you found under the stone, did you, Auntie dear? But he came and told Uncle Henry all about it at once, and you mustn't be very angry, Auntie dear; because I love him very much, and he's my Uncle Henry, you see."

"Has he got any money?" asked Aunt Charlotte, after an anxious pause. Mr. Lauriston satisfied her on this point. "Well, I hope he deserves you," she conceded at last.

"I knew you were going to be nice," declared Cicely, kissing her gratefully. "But you must forgive the others too, because that was our fault."

"Your fault?" Mrs. Lauriston looked at her husband.

"Not Uncle Henry's," said Cicely, "mine. They would have told you and that would have been so soon. So I used to find out where Doris was going and tell him, and he told Mr. Crichton without letting him know he knew, because neither she nor Agatha would ever have gone of themselves. I know I oughtn't to have done it, but if someone had told Uncle Henry where you were going to be when you wouldn't have said yourself, you wouldn't have been very angry with the someone, would you, Auntie? And they are *their* Uncle Henrys. Only don't tell them because they don't know I did it all. It's just a secret for

you because I'm telling you everything, and you're such a nice old Aunt,—no, not old, only an old dear, and we are all going to tea on the house-boat to-morrow, and then you'll be very nice to him, won't you?"

Mrs. Lauriston's answer was only a shake of the head, but Cicely must have found encouragement in her expression, for she kissed her again and then ran off to tell the others the good news, while husband and wife followed more slowly towards the camp.

CHAPTER XXXVI

"OH Auntie, it's he," was Cicely's sufficient introduction, as Talbot, still attired in the blue suit, brown boots, and Panama hat, advanced to meet the little procession that neared the boathouse. With him came Charles, still magnanimous and willing to begin the duties of best man from the beginning.

Mrs. Lauriston, though she had yielded and was in a Sunday mood, was yet minded to be severe to the male delinquent. But Talbot took her hand firmly, before she had time for speech. "Cicely's aunt?" he said. "It is my regret not to have known you before. I must be permitted to make amends in the future."

Charles, in the capacity of best man, bowed to aunt and niece in his finest manner, so far as a straw hat allowed. "My friend is a man to be congratulated," he said, including the elder lady in the suggestion.

"With your consent, too, I hope," added Talbot in a manner that admitted of no reply. Mr. Lauriston and the other girls, who were a few yards behind, now came up and introductions were effected. Mrs. Lauriston was still almost silent. She was considering Talbot, who stood beside her. On her other hand was Cicely, looking up beseechingly.

Presently Mrs. Lauriston addressed him with unwonted mildness. "You will be kind to her?" she said with almost a note of entreaty in her voice. "I never had any children of my own, and she ——"

Talbot bent down a little to answer her fears. She seemed curiously different from the idea he had formed of her, and, indeed, she may have felt a difference in herself. "I hope she

will always find a mother in you, and that you will have me for a son," he added, surprised at himself as he spoke.

Meanwhile Mr. Lauriston had seized the opportunity of a word with Charles. "My wife—" he began in an undertone, "I mean—she knows who you are of course, but she is not aware—I have not had a favourable opportunity of informing her—that I used to come and see you here."

Charles remembered the highly technical conversation sustained during his visit to the other camp, and gallantly repressed a smile. "I quite understand," he said. "Will you honour me by allowing our friendship to have been of older date, and our meeting down here to have been but a most unexpected renewal of it?"

Mr. Lauriston nodded gratefully. Tact such as this was rare in an unfeeling world, and for its sake he was prepared to condone any slight confusion of dates. "So far as I am concerned," he said, "I should have been happy to count you among my friends whenever and wherever I had met you."

Thereupon Sir Seymour claimed Mrs. Lauriston, leading her off to the tent by the house-boat, while Talbot was left for a moment with Cicely. It is to be feared that he wished the whole party anywhere, and his face said as much. "Wouldn't you prefer the perch-hole?" he suggested.

Cicely blushed. "You don't know what trouble we had to come."

Talbot looked at her and understood. "It's over now?" he asked.

"You must be very good to Aunt Charlotte," she replied.

"Yes," he admitted, "we shall always be grateful to her."

By this time the others had reached the tent, and Mrs. Lauriston had presented to her Majendie and the Admiral, neatly attired in grey flannel, and William, who was still as disreputable as of old, except for the facts that he had shaved and wore a tie. Even Talbot had not convinced him that it was his duty to go into the town yesterday and procure raiment suitable for the occasion. Her attention was principally given to Majendie, who, after shaking hands, adjusted his eye-glasses and began boldly. "I am very pleased to meet you. I had the honour of being of some slight professional service to Miss Neave. I have hoped for this opportunity ever since."

Mrs. Lauriston thanked him for his efforts on her niece's

behalf, reflecting that Agatha might after all do worse, and she acquiesced in his at once monopolising the young lady. In Doris she could not be expected to take so much interest, but she greeted the Admiral politely enough, after which he followed the Doctor's example.

Mrs. Lauriston was settled in the most comfortable chair by the attentive Sir Seymour, and had leisure to observe the tea-table. It displayed a profusion of inedible but artistic cakes, confectionery, chocolates, and cocoanut biscuits, sandwiches of cucumber, of watercress, of jam—indeed everything that yesterday's expedition had been able to procure. It was a wasteful extravagance, and she felt that, even though in her honour, it should be rebuked. "Thank you, I will have a piece of bread and butter," she said in answer to Charles's enquiries.

Charles looked round anxiously. Men always overlook essentials on festal occasions. Fortunately, however, William had thought of the bread and butter at the last moment and there was a plate. "We had hoped that you would preside," said Charles indicating the tea-pot which was placed close to Mrs. Lauriston. And so it came about that Mrs. Lauriston, with a baronet in respectful attendance, made tea for six very self-absorbed young people with her husband and William as an interested but amicable audience.

She was, however, saved from too acute reflection on the mutability of human affairs by Charles's conversation, which never flagged. "It was a very odd thing that I should have met your husband down here of all places, was it not?" he said, true to his word. "In Leadenhall Street I confess it would not have surprised me, but to learn that he was actually camping out within a quarter of a mile of me was the last thing I expected. Needless to say I took an early opportunity of paying my respects."

Mrs. Lauriston listened with amiability. It spoke well for her husband that he should be in the habit of meeting persons of title in Leadenhall Street, and reticence about such matters was only to be expected in a man. "I hope you will come and see us in Ealing," she said.

Charles expressed the pleasure he would gain from doing so, and went on to touch lightly on other subjects. "A remarkable man," he said, looking at Talbot, who at that moment was

pressing chocolates on Cicely, "and quite one of the leading juniors. He can bully an unsatisfactory witness better than any man I know, and has as much work as he knows what to do with." Mrs. Lauriston reflected that, though not of her own catching, Talbot was eminently eligible so far as his worldly position went, and hoped that Cicely would manage to avoid having to give evidence when he was acting officially. She was also reassured as to Dr. Majendie, who, Charles pointed out, was bound to succeed, for was he not the son of his father? It was also satisfactory, since she was in some sort responsible for Doris, to learn that Mr. Crichton was well thought of in scholastic circles. And lastly Charles managed delicately to hint that his party by no means neglected going to church—had in fact been there that morning.

In short by the time the meal was over Mrs. Lauriston was prepared to acquiesce in the course events had taken and was even beginning to see how, rightly understood, not a little of the credit for it was due to herself. Charles also was pleased, for he perceived that he had recovered his lost ground and was advancing in the lady's good opinion. It was perhaps, he thought as he looked at his friends, but the belated shutting of the stable-door; nevertheless after the failure of his previous effort it was something to reinstate himself now. Emboldened by his progress his ideas of hospitality asserted themselves. He had conferred with William, who brought out a tray, on which were glasses of varied shape and size and a magnum of champagne. Mrs. Lauriston regarded the one with disapproval and the others with pain, but Charles, nothing daunted, smiled at Cicely and Talbot and addressed himself to the company in general and to Mrs. Lauriston in particular, while William grappled with the cork. "On this auspicious occasion," he began in the time-honoured manner, "when camp and house-boat are no longer—" but an interruption occurred and the prepared period was lost.

Standing just outside the circle was Martin, considerably disconcerted at finding his master and mistress there, and somewhat at a loss as to what he should do with a large Gladstone bag which he held in his hand. He had been informed that Mr. and Mrs. Lauriston and their party were going out to tea but not with whom. Therefore, when in course of conversation with one of the miller's men he had learnt about the Gladstone bag in the cupboard, he

had judged it a good opportunity to take it to the house-boat, quieting the man's scruples and persuading him to unlock the door by saying that there was a reward attaching to it, a reward which might be capable of sub-division. Martin therefore grasped the bag and went off with it in triumph, and was now puzzled to explain matters in Mrs. Lauriston's presence.

"The portmanteau," whispered Cicely to Talbot, "and the big girl never gave it back."

"She meant to, but she was thinking of the curate," he returned. But some measure of justice overtook him.

Charles relieved Martin of the trouble of explanation. "My missing bag," he exclaimed for Mrs. Lauriston's benefit, rising from his chair. "It got lost somehow, and I have been offering a reward for it. That is very good of you," he said to Martin. "Here is,—" he felt in his waistcoat-pocket and then suddenly remembered something. He went over to Talbot. "Lend me a couple of pounds, old fellow," he said, "a reward for the bag." Talbot handed them over while Cicely laughed approval at Charles, who on second thoughts returned one, and went on to Majendie and the Admiral and levied half a sovereign from each of them. Justice was thus evenly distributed and Martin went away rejoicing.

Thus Charles had leisure to return to the more important matter that had been deferred, but, perceiving that the magnum had not been so successful as himself in winning a way to Mrs. Lanriston's good graces, he altered the form of his intended toast giving the honest bottle a chance to reinstate itself too. And so it came about that criticism was disarmed, and the wine flowed in honour of the Mistress and Master of The Enemy's Camp.

THE END

IMPERIAL RECRUITING-GROUNDS

In the opinion of the men on the spot, and therefore, according to Lords Curzon and Elgin, the men most likely to know the true state of affairs, the real origin of the unrest and uprising among the warlike Zulus and other Kafir tribes in South Africa is neither the poll nor the hut tax. Both, it is true, have been, and may be still, the nominal reason for the general ferment and warlike spirit that is bursting its trammels in the southern hemisphere, but neither is the real reason of the mutiny against the Paramount Power any more than the real reason of the Sepoy Rebellion of 1857 was the cartridges believed to have been made from the fat of pigs and cows.

To find the true cause one must look deeper, and study the history and natural instincts of the Zulu nation. In the opinion of those best qualified to judge, that is to say of those who have spent their lives among these warrior tribes of South Africa, and who speak their tongue with the native-like vibration that can only be acquired by long residence in and among their kraals, the true reason of the outbreak is nothing more or less than the natural warlike instincts of the race.

It has always been, and still is, the custom of the race, in spite of the apparent peace within its confines for over a quarter of a century, that a Zulu boy does not assume manhood, with its full complement of wives and cattle, until he has wetted his assegai in the blood of a foe.

Since the downfall of Cetewayo as the head of a great fighting nation, wars both inter-tribal and against the white man have ceased. The rôle of the witch-doctor has practically disappeared and the young bloods have, forsooth, during these times of enforced peace within the borders of the once bellicose land of the Zulu, been prevented, by the Great White Power that is over them, from indulging their warlike propensities in anything

more exciting than competition in throwing the knobkerri and assegai and the fantastic measures of an occasional war-dance.

It takes more than a quarter of a century to cool the hot blood of a martial race. It has taken considerably more than a century to convert into peaceful husbandmen the once martial races of Bengal and Madras who under Clive helped us to found our Empire in the East. When once, however, such a conversion is accomplished, it is practically impossible to reinstate the former fighting spirit into a race. It is these descendants of the virile tribes of Southern India, whose warlike attributes have been dulled by long neglect of the sword and fostering of the plough, that we now consider no longer fit to wear our uniform nor to fight our battles for us. The assegais of the Zulus, however, are not so blunted nor their spirit so tamed that they desire to forget for ever the prowess of their forbears, and to turn their fighting metal into ploughshares under the protecting influence of the *Pax Britannica*.

The question, then, which arises is this : from an Imperial point of view is it most desirable to try to kill by degrees the warlike instincts of the race, and to suffer the heroes of a hundred fights to sink gradually into mere hewers of wood and drawers of water, or shall we foster the magnificent material at our hands in South Africa and make use of it for Imperial purposes, thus raising up for ourselves and for our descendants a loyal race of chivalrous fighting men who will stand by us in our hour of need as have done our gallant Sikhs and Ghoorkhas ?

The position of the Zulu nation after their defeat in 1879 was very similar to that of the Sikhs after the decisive battle of Goojerat on 21st February, 1849. In both cases a martial race had after severe fighting succumbed to the power of Great Britain. In both cases the Government of the day determined that for the peace of the country the warlike soul of the conquered nation should be smothered, and that ploughshares should take the place of swords and assegais.

That this decision was taken as regards the Sikhs in 1849 is somewhat curious, because immediately after the conclusion of the first Sikh war in 1846 our former enemies showed their loyalty to us in a most marked manner. It will be remembered that when John Nicholson was in Cashmere, as military instructor to the local forces, a rebellion was raised in that country against our protégé Gholab Singh, by Imam ud Din the Governor

of Srinagar and the Vizier Lal Singh, with the intention of throwing off the suzerainty of Great Britain. There being no regular forces at hand to stamp this out, we called to our aid some ten thousand Sikhs from the ranks of our late enemies, under Lawrence and Hodson, to assist us in placing on the throne of Cashmere Gholab Singh, a man who in the eyes of the Khalsa was a rebel against their late Government. Right loyally did our former foes perform their part. Such rash and enterprising combinations are perhaps unintelligible to the average foreigner, but it is the way we have made our Empire, it is the way we have made our former enemies our friends, and have firmly rooted the loyalty of our fighting races. Nevertheless, John Lawrence decided after the conclusion of the second Sikh War that the recruiting of Sikhs for our Native Army was undesirable, and an order strictly forbidding it was issued by him just before the Mutiny in 1856.

Had John Lawrence's ideas prevailed, one of two things must in the natural course of events have happened ; either the martial attributes of the race would gradually have died out, and they would have sunk, as the Bengalis and Madrassis have, and as the Rajputs and Mahrattas are sinking, into a race of peaceful husbandmen, whose sole ambition is ease and a sufficiency of money for their daily wants, varied at times by a dash of intrigue and disloyalty to the Paramount Power, or the young bloods would (like the Zulus) have continued to live up to the chivalrous standard of their fathers, and trained themselves for the ordeal of war against the time when a fresh opportunity should present itself of again wetting their swords for the Khalsa and proving themselves Singhs in act as well as in name. The latter opportunity would most undoubtedly have been found by the Sikh nation during the troublous times of 1857-8, and all our blood and treasure expended during the two Sikh wars would have been in vain. Luckily for the Empire, however, in the beginning of 1857 we had in the Punjab such far-seeing and shrewd lieutenants as Herbert Edwardes, John Nicholson, and Neville Chamberlain. The result was that, owing to their advice, and it may be said to their insistence, John Lawrence's short-sighted measures were overruled and the gallant soldiers of the Khalsa flocked to the standard of Nicholson and his companions. History tells how this warlike race, but lately our foes on many a hard fought field, loyally upheld the cause of their new masters

during the dark days of the Mutiny, and how they have since, in many a battle, both within and without the marches of our Indian Empire, proved themselves to be in the first rank as gallant and faithful soldiers of their Sovereign.

What our army in India would be without our Sikhs, those who have spent their lives in the East know. The same may be said of the Ghoorkhas, Dogras, Beloochis, and Punjabi-Mahomedans, all of which races have measured swords with us in the past, and in all of whom we have since found gallant fighters in our ranks.

It is these races, martial by nature, by history, and by inclination, that form the backbone of our Indian army. It is to these nations that we have given the only natural and possible outlet for their warlike propensities by making them soldiers of the King. They have, as have the Zulus of to-day, the same desire to prove themselves men and to follow the profession of arms; but unlike the latter they are encouraged to do so, and by this timely foresight in the past, we have gained for our great Empire several races of men whose gallantry and loyalty on a thousand fields have been written in golden letters in the annals of our nation.

It would take many years to kill outright the martial attributes of the Zulu. Years and years of fighting ancestry have made him, like the Sikh and the Ghoorkha, a born soldier, and although in times of poverty and distress he is sullenly willing to work in the mines or to till the soil for a scanty wage which, when saved up for years, will buy him a wife and a cow, his natural warlike instincts are still alive, as the present year shows, and the youth of the nation but hankers after the life of a soldier and an opportunity to prove himself a man as did his fathers before him.

Nowadays a large number of troops from our Indian army are yearly taken for service over-sea both in times of peace and of war; Aden, the East Coast of Africa, Hong Kong, the Straits Settlements, and Mauritius are cases in point, to say nothing of Egypt, China, and Malta when necessity arises. If we denude India of its troops for service beyond the borders of that Empire, why should we not in part fill their places by Imperial native troops from other parts of the British Empire?

Ten years ago, in an article on this very subject in a Service Journal, I wrote as follows :

We are an Imperial Nation, and it seems a matter of regret that our recruiting, whether it be for the Empire at large or at all events for that

portion of it which is under the Government of India, should not be carried out under more Imperial conditions. To make use of our fighting races in India for service elsewhere in the Empire, as we do at present, by employing soldiers recruited in Northern India for service in Africa, Mauritius, Singapore, Hong Kong, Burmah and Aden, or for active service in any part of the Globe when occasion requires, is but acting up to our Imperial Policy ; but if we export Indian soldiers for service abroad, why not import others besides Home Troops for service in India ?

In 1893 there was some commotion at Army Head-Quarters, Simla, over the disaffection in the North-West Provinces, Oudh, and Bengal, connected in some mysterious way with the "tree daubing," and no little difficulty was experienced in arranging for the despatch of troops to the disaffected districts who would have no sympathies or caste ties with the rioters, should resort to arms become necessary. The necessity and the advantage of having troops on the side of Government unconnected in any way with the people of riotous or mutinous neighbourhoods was clearly portrayed to us during the dark days of the mutiny. Had we at our disposal, beside the many tribes of which our Indian Army is composed, battalions of Zulus, Houssas, North American Indians, Arabs, Soudanese, Malays, &c., not only would the effect, politically speaking, be far reaching and advantageous, but in case of necessity arising for the despatch of the best and most reliable regiments of our Indian Army either across the seas or across the frontiers on active service, the presence of troops, aliens to the natives of India, while loyal to and dependent on the British Government for their pay and prosperity, and who could have no possible sympathy with the people of the soil, would do more to ensure peace within our borders than would be possible were our "Obligatory Garrisons" composed of purely Indian-raised troops.

The ten years that have passed since then, and the experience of three times ten years spent mostly in India and partly in South Africa, have only made me more convinced that the true solution of the Native Problem in South Africa, be the tribes Basutos, Zulus, Swazis, or Matabilis, is that solution which has bound fast to the Empire the fighting races of India—namely, to grant to these tribes the facilities for following their natural careers as soldiers in an honourable and remunerative form.

The possible areas of our remaining recruiting-fields in India itself are becoming year by year contracted and the produce less satisfactory. The Rajputs and Mahrattas, from long years of peace, are no longer the magnificent raw material we once had to work on ; no longer is it their proud boast that no generation has ever sheathed its sword and that their horsemen water their steeds at every stream in Hindostan. Even the Sikhs, Dogras, Ghurkhas and Punjabi-Mahomedans are beginning to

show signs of martial deterioration, and were it not for our ever recurring little wars, the fighting spirit of these races would gradually die out. As it is, we recruit a great deal more than many consider safe from beyond the marches of our Empire across the North-West Frontier among the Afridis, Urukzais, Jowakis, and such like tribes. In times of peace these gallant hillmen serve us well, and in times of war, with but few exceptions, they have proved themselves true to their salt while the Union Jack is in the ascendant. The question arises, however, as to what would be their behaviour in the event of a big war with Russia or maybe with the combined forces of Russia and Afghanistan, when their loyalty would be put to a severer test than it was at the Peiwar Kotal in 1878 and in the Tirah Campaign of 1897. At any rate, given a war with Russia or Afghanistan, we could no longer count on the same results from our trans-frontier recruiting as we do now; most certainly not, were we unfortunate enough to suffer the slightest initial reverse, and when has Great Britain ever waged a big war in which reverses did not form the early chapters of events before we came to the later period of "muddling through"?

The Empire is large and its responsibilities, both within and without its borders, are ever increasing. Fighting men will always be required, in numbers increasing in geometrical progression as the years go by. Please God the day may come when the white man of the Empire will quit himself like a man and take upon his shoulders the duty of universal training in the Militia or Volunteer Forces throughout our dominions, so as to fit himself for his duty in defence of his home and country if need be; and let us pray that this may be ere our fighting instincts have become as dulled as those of the descendants of the victors of Arcot and Plassy, and ere our enemies take us unawares at our gates. We should, however, look to the martial instincts and training of the coloured tribes within the Empire as well as to our own, for on them we have depended in the past, and on them we shall have to depend in the future to maintain the integrity of our vast inheritance.

Is it wise to consider only the present when the future looms so big before us? Is it wise to endeavour to obtain a temporary peace within our borders by destroying for ever the magnificent fighting qualities of the Zulus and other martial races within the Empire? The loyalty of the Sikhs and the Ghoorkhas was worth

to us, after we had fought side by side in 1857, treble what it was before. A Zulu brigade that had wetted its assegais and shouldered its rifles alongside the British and Native Indian forces in battle for the Great White King would go far to instil into the tribe the loyalty and devotion which is the type of all that is noblest and best in a soldier, and which is found to-day in our former opponents in the Nepaul, Scinde, and Punjab wars.

The idea of employing in our army Imperial native troops from the four quarters of the Empire, and bringing them together in the comradeship of war-training and war, is neither chimerical nor impossible ; it is but the natural evolution of an empire on the lines carried out by Cæsar, Alexander, and other great empire-builders of old. The resultant intercourse between the various fighting tribes throughout our Empire could not but be beneficial to all concerned, and would lead to a better appreciation of our resources on the part of the many races that owe us allegiance. It would impress the North-American Indian, the Zulu, the Maori, the Houssa, the men of Uganda and the Soudan, the Arab, the Malay and the heterogeneous and manifold races of India alike with the power of the Sovereign under whose flag they thrive and prosper, and under whose government they find justice, peace, and honour, the like of which was unknown in the great empires of the past. The idea is Imperial, the results would be Imperial, and would forge yet one more link of strength and harmony in the chain that encircles our world-wide dominions.

VINCULUM

the average Englishman who takes a holiday in his native land does not trouble himself as a rule about the legal aspects of his various enjoyments. A meekly conscientious sightseer, he visits ruined abbeys, cathedrals, and historical castles at the time and in the manner dictated by the guide-book, is prepared to pay his shilling or sixpence, and generally shows all respect to other people's property. At the sea-side he finds that practically he can bathe, fish, or sail as he pleases, subject only in the towns to bye-laws necessary for convenience and decency. On the river the same applies to bathing and rowing (but he must make inquiries before he fishes), and in many inland counties he can wander on foot or horseback over commons, moorland, or open down for miles without challenge, save perhaps from some much-tried golfer who has left his temper and manners in the nearest bunker. So long, then, as such freedom is open to him, he does not brood over the legal rights and wrongs of his position.

Now and again a faint echo from the law-courts may reach him, as when a claim to exclude him from some favourite place is made and established; but he knows that he has always been able to rely on a well-recognised fact that the rights which the law of England gives to landowners have hitherto been tempered by a sense of obligation. The law permits of selfishness; strong but unwritten custom lays down that it is unbecoming to those who have inherited places of historical interest or natural beauty. Thus the public are given access at proper times and with reasonable safeguards, and so long as the sightseer can enjoy himself, he does not mind whether the law upholds him as a genuine traveller, politely pats him on the back as, so to say, a chartered libertine, or even frowns disapproval at him as a technical trespasser.

Undeniably, this system,—that of the absolute legal right of owners to exclude the public, modified by benevolent custom—

has, on the whole and in the majority of cases, worked very well indeed. Ancient fabrics have been preserved : there has been an absence of red tape and officialism ; and, where freedom has been curtailed, in nine cases out of ten it has been through the misconduct and selfishness, not of the owner, but of misbehaving visitors.

If alterations in our law are ever found necessary, it is clear at the outset that the terms of access to historical castles and buildings still habitable and inhabited must be those upon which the comfort and convenience of the inmates are properly ensured. A right of invasion of an Englishman's castle because it is a large and ancient and castellated building would not accord with established principles ; but for the public enjoyment of such places as, to name a few, Pevensey, Hurstmonceux, and Kenilworth Castles, Fountains Abbey, Tintern Abbey, the camps on the Roman wall in Northumberland, and Stonehenge, different considerations prevail. Most of those named, and others similar, are owned privately : the fees, where charged, are usually for maintenance only, and the public have sufficient freedom ; but the argument that their rights ought not to be defeasible or subject to individual caprice is stronger. Then also there are questions of the right of excursion to places of natural beauty, such as the Cumberland lakes, rivers, mountains, and waterfalls, the Malvern hills, the Sussex downs, the caves near Buxton, the Thames, the Norfolk Broads, and the coast of Cornwall ; and likewise concerning such matters as rights of bathing, fishing, and other recreations. The recent decision in the case of Stonehenge has once more drawn attention to the question as to how far our present law in England holds an even balance between two conflicting interests. On the one hand there is the worker, who seeks to enjoy his much-needed holiday in a land whose orators shout very loudly to him of freedom, and on the other the owner of property, who does not care to risk its defilement and defacement at the hands of the baser sort of tourist, or even the freeholder, who has paid for privacy in his domain and considers he is entitled to have it.

Fortunately for those who discuss a concrete instance, the case of Stonehenge was one in which the element of personal selfishness, and all the prejudices it brings, was conspicuously absent. The owner, his advisers, and his opponents alike recognised both the moral right of the people to visit this wonderful monument

and the importance of its preservation, only differing as to the best method of combining two somewhat incompatible objects.

To arbitrate between persons inspired with the best motives, but entertaining diametrically opposite opinions as to methods, would have been rather a delicate matter ; but a judge who has to interpret the law is absolved from personal responsibility for it, and the question whether the law is best left alone or ought to be improved is one ultimately for the people, who can leave it or mend it. For this purpose some account of it as appearing in the quoted and other recent decisions may be useful, especially as its full significance is hardly yet appreciated.

Like much other English law, that applicable in this instance has for the most part to be taken from times before railways, telegraphs, telephones, huge towns with octopus tentacles of suburbs, and monster excursions, and then squeezed and moulded to fit modern conditions ; and thus inevitably come about legal fictions and other absurdities and inconsistencies. But the broad principle of it is that private right, when once established, can only be tempered by ancient custom, and ancient custom is a thing of medievalisms, quaint and interesting enough, but not always applicable to the present. For example, the inhabitants of a certain village valued their privilege of dancing round a maypole at the appropriate season in a field privately owned, and established it by custom ; but the King's subjects in general did not trouble themselves about their right to gape at Stonehenge from inside the circle, or, just as probably, ancient owners did not trouble to dispute the right of access to a bare bit of down, thinking that possible groats from excursionists were too few to be worth collecting, which may well have been the case. But the consequence remains that the villager can dance round the maypole, a thing that he usually considers beneath his dignity at the present day, and the owner of Stonehenge could if he pleased encircle the stones with a hoarding thirty feet high, carve his name upon them and sell visitors the privilege of carving theirs, or even have every single one of them blasted to pieces with dynamite if it suited his fancy.

In cases where the right of dancing round a maypole, or of following any other specified recreation such as playing cricket, was established on private property, the ancient judges seem to have been very careful to limit it, for reasons which no doubt were sufficient at the time, but which do not, as a rule, seem to

have any present application. Such decisions, however, still bind modern judges, and thus it was held lately that the public, as such, cannot claim a custom of recreation, but only the inhabitants of a parish. Even a district was too large a unit. Perhaps the question whether a traveller staying at an inn for a week was entitled to be considered a temporary inhabitant might be arguable, but the ordinary excursionist could certainly acquire no rights by his journey. To many millions in search of recreation, therefore, ancient custom avails nothing.

The right to travel on the highway or public path will here suggest itself as an exception to the above rule, being a privilege extended to all ; but legally this right is on a different footing from those just considered. If the tourist exercises it alternately with that of obtaining refreshment from licensed victuallers, his position is unassailable ; but a series of recent decisions has shown that directly he stands still on the road for any purpose whatever he is in danger of being a trespasser. In the case of a man who stopped on a road across a moor and flapped his umbrella to spoil a grouse-drive, not much sympathy need be wasted, nor need the bookmaker's tout who loitered about a highway for the purpose of spying trials be considered a martyr to injustice ; but the judges who applied the law in these instances had to admit that, if pressed home, it would prevent an artist from planting his easel by the roadside, and technically it might even prohibit a wayfarer from stopping to admire the view. Moreover, the prevailing impression that the public can acquire rights by going to a place of interest for a long enough period should have been rudely dispelled by the Stonehenge and other cases, which it followed, laying down the law that, in general, a public road is a road which leads from one public place to another (as not even a country common is necessarily a public place, it might almost be said, from one public-house to another), and that "there cannot be a right for the public to go to a place where the public have no right to be." If loyal citizens had been accustomed to pass through the circle at Stonehenge in order to drink a pint of beer at Amesbury, the law might have helped them, but if they came to see the stones, it would not allow time or usage to legalise such a proceeding.

It has been said that a country common is not a public place ; technically it is a waste piece of ground over which certain neighbouring inhabitants had rights in ancient times, usually to put

cattle and sheep to graze. Being thus open to a considerable number of persons, a stranger would not find himself molested by owners ; but again he has no legal rights, except on certain specified commons dealt with in particular Acts of Parliament. Unless he is in the neighbourhood of a large town, he is more likely than not to be a trespasser.

If a tourist has a passion for being always within his strict legal rights, perhaps he may object to this state of things and turn his attention to the river, where he will have seen considerable freedom of behaviour. But here again, if he wishes to enjoy himself, he cannot extract much comfort from the Law Reports. The smaller rivers and tributaries are private property ; along the King's streams, such as the Thames, the public have a right of navigation which is simply a right of way, so that here again the loiterer will technically become a trespasser. And on the reasoning in the Stonehenge and other cases, it would seem that this right would not extend to a backwater, the case of a *cul-de-sac* in a town, like Stratton Street off Piccadilly, being judicially distinguished.

As regards fishing, it was laid down by a late distinguished judge that the public, as such, have no rights at all ; and it would seem that the free fishing in the Thames has for the most part come about by accident, former owners having let their rights to stop anglers lapse by disuse. The public are thus indebted for their privileges, not to the law, but to the carelessness or good-nature of individuals.

As regards bathing, and applying the principles governing the use of highways, the question of legal right would seem to be one of fact. A man swimming from one riverside public-house to another might be in an unassailable position, while one who bathed from a stationary boat where the banks were privately owned might be a trespasser. Where the banks are owned by public bodies the public will of course have rights defined by statute and bye-law, but this is not the general case.

If the intending holiday-maker finally decides that he does not like fishing by indulgence, or punctuating long drinks by longer stretches of swimming, perhaps as a last resort he may think of the seaside. He has a shadowy idea that the King owns the foreshore between the tides, allowing his subjects to roam over the beach, and a clearer one that the sea is not the subject of private ownership. Here at last should be found symbolic and literal freedom.

It may be said at once that his presumptions of law are in the main correct ; but the Stuart kings had a habit of granting Crown property to their friends, and if a piece was on the coast would throw in the foreshore, which then became private property. The public, having an inalienable right of fishing in the sea, have as appendant to it a right of access to the shore for that purpose, and a shipwrecked mariner may also save his life by landing where he can, without liability to actions for trespass ; but this limits the public right, and where the coast is privately owned it has been very recently held that there is no right of bathing or recreation. So no doubt, if the baby on the shore in the popular song had been found by a policeman, it would have had to explain that it was exercising a legal right by looking for shell-fish ; and the Walrus and the Carpenter would have proved that the oysters were free by custom, and their expedition thus both lawful and expedient.

A broad objection may be raised to such a presentation of the law that practically everybody does not stand on their strict rights all day long, and thus matters adjust themselves on a fair basis of give and take ; and indeed, judges have uttered solemn warnings to the public not to be over anxious about their privileges, lest riparian and other owners should take alarm and become churlish, standing on their strict rights lest they should lose them by indulgence. However, for those who are ready to adjust ancient laws to modern conditions it seems a fair question whether the public should depend so largely on indulgence in matters of such importance, and whether any change which might be desirable would not be more easily made now than hereafter. Hitherto holiday-makers have had little or no cause for complaint, and in these matters *noblesse oblige* has bound the owners of historic places, because they have usually belonged to noble English families. But times are now changing. The typical Earl of Bareacres, whatever his faults, was proud of his place and pleased that his countrymen should come and find the honourable records and relics of his ancestors ; but the worthy Mr. Hoggenheimer, to whom the impecunious peer has had to sell his home, has no such sentiments. He desires to entertain people whose pictures appear in illustrated papers, and does not care for tourists ; and if he can do so without becoming unpopular with the set to which he aspires, he will probably exclude them.

Perhaps this danger of mere selfishness is small as yet, if not

negligible ; but another coming danger is that the money which the public can be made to pay for sight-seeing may in certain cases represent an income with which a needy landowner cannot afford to dispense. In a certain locality not far north of the English border this is already largely the case. No doubt it tends to the preservation of ancient buildings, because supplying a powerful motive to this end ; but it seems a pity that the people's delight in their popular heroes should be taxed to benefit individuals. By the accident of British lack of enterprise, no Places of Interest Trust has hitherto been established, nor have "corners" been made in Warwickshire and Roxburghshire ; nevertheless, it may be well for us to consider our law before the American hustler comes over and shows us what he can do in this direction.

A third danger has been suggested in the remark that the owner of Stonehenge might blow up the stones with dynamite. In this case no one supposes anything so ridiculous, but it may fairly be urged that such danger is not entirely inconceivable for all places and all the future. Sudden madness is not a possibility which should be utterly disregarded, if its results would be disastrous for all time ; and even persons usually accounted sane may find reasons satisfactory to themselves for doing the most irreparable damage. There was a striking instance lately in America, where the owner of certain Red Indian monuments known as the Painted Rocks had them destroyed because the tourists going to see them disturbed his privacy. As the law now stands in England, there is nothing to prevent this gentleman buying some historical ruin or natural object of beauty and dealing with it in a similar fashion ; and even if such an occurrence is rendered very unlikely by our better enforcement of the law against trespassers, the same effect may arise from other causes. Fanaticism, for example, may be far more destructive than mere selfishness ; and the descendants of Cromwell's Ironsides, contemplating any cathedral which the Protector honoured with a visit, need not flatter themselves that even fanaticism is impossible to Anglo-Saxons. It is said that a certain peer has become a Buddhist, and another was a Mahomedan ; among all the landowners in England there may be several more who have turned to these faiths, in addition to a number of atheists and agnostics, scientific and otherwise. In the ordinary case the beliefs of these gentlemen might not be of any public importance ; but the convert is

nothing if not zealous, and a Mahomedan or militant atheist owning some priceless relic of Christianity would have those who valued it entirely at his mercy, while he regarded their reverence as mere foolish superstition. And, as there are plenty of people in England who still share Cromwell's sentiments on certain subjects, it is not even necessary to put the unlikely case of the Mahomedan. There are many professing Christians who would be only too glad to destroy shrines and relics, provided they could do so lawfully. The fact that no serious damage of this sort has been perpetrated by any landowner in England for so long is not due to the law, but to the fortunate accident that no iconoclast or monomaniac has yet acquired this kind of property. If, according to precedent, our legislators wait until the particular combination for mischief comes to pass and something priceless is destroyed, it is to be hoped they will make a proper use of their lesson.

An Act thus passed on a wave of public indignation might be too sweeping ; if the danger is prevented in time, there need be no disturbance of our present system worth mentioning, for machinery is already at hand in our law, and can be applied by Parliament when thought necessary. More than twenty years ago an Act was passed called the Ancient Monuments Protection Act, by which owners were given powers to make a quasi-dedication of certain objects of interest (including Stonehenge) to the public in return for the expenses of preservation. The exercise of these powers is now permissive only,—that is to say, the matter depends solely on the views and opinions of the owner ; but if certain public bodies were given a power exercised every day by railway companies in their own interests,—the power to acquire land otherwise than by agreement, on payment of adequate compensation—all possible mischief would be averted. If proper discretion were observed, and the exercise of it were made subject to the consent of some responsible Minister, such a power would be used sparingly, and places like Pevensey Castle left to their owners, with every advantage to the public and posterity ; but it could be applied where the possessor was bankrupt, a lunatic, a fanatic, or even a selfish curmudgeon or otherwise unworthy to own an object of national importance. Perhaps this should not apply to residences or the surrounding gardens ; but it might be useful if an owner could bind his successor to admit the public at reasonable times,

without creating a legal charity or being liable to the interference (now often highly resented) of the Charity Commissioners. At present such a condition is void if it is not technically charitable. With such reforms, the question of right of way might also be modified to this extent, that the view of a waterfall or from a hill should be recognised to be as legitimate an object as a public-house, so that a way there and back again by the same path might be acquired by usage. And if necessary a *jus desipendi in loco*, or a legal right to loiter for innocent purposes, might be given to the wayfarer.

Such compulsory powers of purchase might be exercisable where the foreshore was owned privately (under the Lands Clauses Acts, which now regulate all such purchases, ample compensation would have to be paid for possible profits from future docks and wharves), and they might also frankly extend to large tracts of open down or woodland to be enjoyed by all the public, and to fishing and even sporting rights. Such a power might also be vested (and perhaps most usefully of all) in any voluntary body binding itself to serve the public interest on lines similar to those of the Garden City Companies. Such associations would not have to consider the immediate pressure on ratepayers' purses, as the councils which can now compulsorily acquire lands for public recreation-grounds are obliged to do.

Well enough as our present law has worked, it seems a fair argument (on the assumption that recreation is necessary for health and sight-seeing for education) that an independent people should not be indebted to indulgence for their necessities, nor honest folk to legal fictions. And, as in the classical case of the Sybelline books, the more promptly the matter is negotiated, the more will the nation get for the money expended.

ALFRED FELLOWS

and who at such weird and grand, kept a general line of
several yards and so a certain fluid state was
seen in the air. At the same time a number of various
kinds of animals, birds, & the like, all
of which in the soft air seemed to have wings, were
seen to fly about in the sun.

FEMALE WRESTLERS IN JAPAN

"THEATRE is not, juggler is not," said Iwase, despairingly pulling a grieved face. We were his guests and our entertainment hung heavily upon his hands; it was distressing, therefore, that the usual gaieties of his native town were absent.

"Then what amusing is?" we persisted, sure in time to discover something we wanted to see. He shook his head with a sharp jerk; this invariably facilitates his thinking process.

"From-here-three-streets-honourable-guest-female-wrestlers-on-to-look-at-might-find-good," he said in one breath.

By all means! We embraced his suggestion enthusiastically, and started so soon as the time came for lighting the lanterns, eager for a sight few travellers have the opportunity to witness.

Iwase's native town is primitive. Its people require no grand setting for their amusements. A few *nobori* (picturesque strips of cotton cloth covered with hieroglyphics) floated like sails from bamboo poles to announce performances of the Amazons daily, from ten in the morning to ten at night, while a drummer, seated on the top of a high tower, drummed and screamed the news into the heads of the illiterate countrymen.

Iwase stopped at the door to negotiate for our admission and paid (we shrewdly suspected by the bargaining) exactly double for us. To be sure, there was some reason in the extra fee. We barbarian foreigners cannot sit neatly packed up on our heels like the Japanese, but must have plenty of room to "stretch out our fat legs." We quote literally from Iwase's explanation, offered in all simplicity to the ticket-collector as an excuse for our peculiarity.

We entered the mat-pavilion through a low doorway opening into a cloak-room, or, its Japanese equivalent, a shoe-room. Here Iwase trustfully left his clogs and received a little wooden block as a check for them; when delivered up at the end of the performance this would serve to distinguish his particular pair

from the hundreds of other similar pairs hung on pegs, like onions in an old-fashioned kitchen.

Once inside we found ourselves under a primitive square tent, draped on the sides with cloth hangings in bold blue and red designs. A little ring of soft clay, enclosed by a girdle of sacks, occupied the centre, and around it stretched a checker-board of rough mats laid on the bare ground. Finally, along the sides of the place ran a very rough scaffolding (two boards and a crack) covered with wadded quilts, raised about three feet from the mud floor, and railed off by a bamboo. Here sat the First Families. As Iwase was most anxious to place us beside them, we obligingly mounted a little ladder evidently intended to impede progress rather than further it. After many stumblings and creepings we were up on to the flooring of uneven boards; but to sit down on the cushions was no easy task, with one board disappearing far below the level at which we had arranged to arrest our downward course, and the other rising unexpectedly to meet us half-way. We accomplished it, however, in time to see the beginning of the performance in decent quiet.

First there stepped into the centre of the ring a man dressed in a blue cotton ceremonial petticoat, and holding a metal fan of oblong shape inscribed with characters. This is the insignia of office, corresponding to the wand of our traditional fairies. He chanted a few sentences of explanation, a reference from the employed to his indulgent employer the public, and then retired to make way for the chief wrestler, controller of the band. She also said a few words craving "our august condescension for her insignificant performers." This humility, even the enforced humility of conventional politeness, sat strangely on her, for she looked the most bombastic and strident person imaginable. Like the famous Montmorency, her heaven was doubtless represented by thirty fights a day.

During her speech the wrestlers trooped in from behind the red and blue curtains. There were about twenty of them, and at first sight it seemed impossible that they could be women. Their figures denied it; their thick, heavy legs, which might have done duty as piles for a pier, their muscular arms, their bull necks. Their clothes denied it also; the short tight jackets of white cloth open at the throat, the trousers reaching to the knee leaving the leg and foot bare, and the heavy cloth belt which Japanese wrestlers use to secure a hold. Even the hair, dressed

in a flat knot on the top of the head, was copied from the fashion of male wrestlers. Lastly, "the gestures and movements of the performers were masculine to a degree of rough uncouthness which horrified us. Could these indeed be specimens of the Japanese women whose reputation is for all the opposite characteristics,—softness of speech and manner, gentleness, unobtrusiveness?" Iwase noticed our impression and hastened to apologise for the performers. "They people rude and unworthy are," he said. "By good fortune all Japan only one village of them contains; but I am ashamed that in the eyes of the honourable guests this bad example should look you." We, on the contrary, felt a sort of Pharisical pleasure that our entertainment was not one offered to the common herd.

The wrestlers arranged themselves in two sides, each led by a captain. They sat cross-legged around the platform in the dirt, all but the two chosen to begin, who advanced into the centre with the umpire. They squatted upon their feet and bowed to each other slowly and solemnly. Politeness thus being fulfilled, they stood up again and bent over opposite one another like two gamecocks, watching intently for a chance to seize an advantage. During the preliminaries the audience was tense with expectation. Then suddenly the women sprang,—hissing at each other furiously and gnashing their teeth, at first by simulating ferocity to spur themselves up to greater excitement, but, after a few clutches, in deadly feminine earnest, the umpire meanwhile buzzing close to them as they swayed round the narrow ring.

Any and all holds seemed fair means to the end of pushing a combatant over the edge. Sometimes with a clean throw one woman landed her opponent sprawling in the midst of her friends. This was the signal for the umpire to begin, "*Hitotsu, futatsu, mitsu, yotsu, itsutsu* (one, two, three, four, five)," in a series of irregular and disconnected squeaks; and before he ceased counting another wrestler from the losing side jumped up to meet the champion, who stood panting, hissing, and spitting like a boiling kettle, in the centre of the arena. This time there were no preliminaries; a wild rush, and like two furies or two beasts the women were struggling again. Some affected quick clutches, some locked their adversaries in their arms and stood stock still for a full five minutes; some picked up their opponents almost at once and threw them bodily over the ring, while others rolled over with them. This latter course threatened to cause

almost a disaster on several occasions. The poor weak umpire (he seemed almost a midget beside them) attempted to assert his prerogatives, to declare the result, as was his custom after every bout, in a high sing-song voice and with a raising of his fan to his forehead, an excellent gesture of finality. But if his decision displeased the combatants, they would have none of it. The captain of each side sprang up into the ring followed by several of her dissatisfied companions. They clutched at his garments ; they pummelled him roughly ; soon partisans in the audience joined the lively discussion. "Without etiquette is," said Iwase scornfully ; but the young gentlemen, who had plainly wagered upon the champions, did not abate their zeal in the least for adverse criticism. Usually the umpire's discretion got the better of his conscience, and he obligingly announced what the majority wanted. Then only was he left in peace ; the irate ladies returned gurgling to their places, and the wrestling recommenced. The act was completed with the vanquishing of one side, after which, bowing low, the performers trooped out to rest.

Pedlars, sweetmeat-sellers, and dispensers of tea moved about among the crowd during the interval. Iwase pressed some tea upon us ; "Most good is for honourable nearness," he said. The audience was delightfully friendly and informal. Babies ran from group to group and were courteously redirected to their rightful owners ; tired spectators curled up for a little nap on the mats ; the thirsty drank with audible enjoyment ; old women drew tiny pipes of silver from their girdles and smoked a whiff of mild tobacco from time to time.

Presently the next act began, announced by the beating together of two wooden blocks. It was a match between two champions more serious than the last, a match to a finish with enormous enthusiasm. Weight-lifting followed to vary the programme, the old familiar business of the woman with the iron jaw, which was less interesting to us because unfamiliar only in its details. As with everything in Japan great ceremony attended the arranging of the loads, which were weighed before our eyes. Iron weights they were, wrapped in straw with a straw handle to hold them by. Some the woman lifted standing ; others she raised as she lay on her back supporting the whole strain with her neck, not only of the weights but of a pyramid of tables and tubs and acrobats on the top of them as well. All the while two of the other wrestlers discoursed music from *samisens*, proving that in Japan,

no less than in England, a true vaudeville artist must be versatile.

The players remained to accompany an old wrestler's dance, very quaint, and now seldom performed according to Iwase. The curious short coats of patched cotton worn by the dancers have been in use on the festival of the God of Wrestling since time immemorial. The gestures of the dance are no less ancient, and wonderfully suggestive and grotesque like Hogarth's paintings, rough and rude certainly, but with that unmistakable touch of life which lends dignity and interest to any performance. It closed with a pantomime supplicating the great Shoki conqueror of Demins, and was in fine at once an epic of strength and a propitiation to the God of Muscle, "the august Heaven Shining Deity," Iwase named him.

One more general *mélée* ended the performance. There was hearty applause again and much bowing, after which we rose stiffly from our cramped position and filed out with the crowd who blocked the doorway while they delivered up the wooden checks and received their clogs in return. At our tea-house Iwase took his leave with many protestations that his entertainment had been "honourably mean" and "augustly rude." He agreed to escort us on the following morning to photograph the women, but only after much begging. We were astonished at the extreme reluctance in such a small matter of one who had been invariably so eager and anxious to please us. The secret slipped out next day when we found our wrestling friends lying quietly on the mats of their tea-house and much averse to any effort. "The people too much *saké* have been drinking," said Iwase scornfully; this was sufficiently evident from their uncombed hair, their wild reddened faces, their dull hazy eyes. Iwase was plainly ashamed to be seen speaking to them, fearing to lose caste thereby. We might coax; he would not. We were at liberty to bribe of course, but our actions must inevitably lower him in the eyes of the *inkyo*, the neighbourhood, the idlers, the old men, women, and babies who gathered around scornfully; even the lowest assumed a superior air before the wrestlers.

Many questions laid bare the root of prejudice. "Much shame is," wailed Iwase, when we asked him why he scorned to interpret our wishes to the wrestlers. His horror came from a deep-rooted convention, a rigid view of decorum laid down in **THE LESSER LEARNING**, which forbids women to contaminate

their reputation lest they bring down reproof on their parents and the community. But worst of all he regarded them as humiliating his people before us their allies, and thereby lowering in our estimation the whole elaborate standard of his national civilisation. That they were villagers from the strange west coast, where established standards are set at naught, and the women are the bread-winners while the men meekly attend to domestic matters, was no excuse for them. He was intensely relieved when we reluctantly gave up our attempt at photography, worsted by the wrestlers' obstinacy ; and the poor man was even more relieved when the gay banners were rolled up and the drum-tower pulled down, unmistakable signs that the company was moving on. Nor did we dare allow how much the entertainment had interested us, lest such a confession should sink us irretrievably in his conventional eyes.

THE LAIRD AND HIS TENANTS

THERE is not much doing in the village on the loch to-day. The water shines serene for the shore hills to use as a mirror, and cats and men bask on its malodorous margin. Until yesterday, for a week there was something of the excitement of real methodical industry in the place. A barque, with all sails set, had crept in from the sea and dropped anchor under the lee of the humpy little peninsula which makes from the mainland as if it had meant to cut the loch in two but had suddenly decided that it was not worth while. Coal for the winter was in that barque, and from the minister of the manse downwards in the scale of importance every householder with pence to spare purchased coal. The inn took small cart-loads of it. The stalwart village Macs, who seem so wasted on the effortless daily round of their lives, dragged wheelbarrows over the shingle, achieving several journeys in the day, pausing between them to sit on the handles of their barrows, re-light their pipes, and talk. Their haggard wives (poor ill-fed souls), instead of climbing on to the moor with creels for peats, established in the wet mud and sand a trail of bare foot-prints, for the tide later to wash out ; they went to and fro without pause.

Each tide which floated the barque showed it higher and higher in the gull-flecked water. Now it is buoyant, almost as a cork, and waits for a wind to depart ; and the village is normal again. The men discuss the chance of a rousing breeze from the west which shall flush the loch with many sea-trout in addition to salt-water, and give them a profitable night with the nets. They also discuss the laird, not affectionately. When he comes north next week with his fine Southron friends, to shoot, fish, and enjoy himself as lairds seem born to do (and for little else in the village opinion), will he, as a year ago, make a disagreeable fuss about the taking of these sea-trout which the village sends

off stealthily in boxes to the little port eight miles away, thence to be caught up by a steamer and so to "Glesca hersel"? Such journeying compares favourably with the feats of transport a hundred years ago, when the fresh salmon were despatched on horseback from Gairloch to the Moray Firth (a two days' jog), there boiled, and sent on thus for London's eating. Locally, the laird's water-bailiffs have been slack at repression these many months. Ever since, in March, Tammas Macrea was shot by one of them in the stomach, feeling round the loch has been of the smouldering dangerous kind. If Tammas's stomach hadn't been a wonderful one, and the catch of salmon that night abundantly consoling, he would have died of the bullet. The doctor himself says so, yet has advised Tammas never to risk a second such accident. But Tammas is related by blood-ties to half the village and his wound is a personal affair with two score other manly Macreas and some Mackenzies to boot; and the water-bailiffs have had it put to them very straight that they will not die in their beds if there is any more shooting. Hence they wink discreetly for a season at the nightly water excursions with nets. The winkers look sour and fierce enough in the daytime, yet have next to nothing to say to the robbers (so they term them) whether in warning or defiance. The robbers themselves smile and do not mind their looks. If the keepers refrain from more deeds, they may be forgiven even that shot at and into Tammas Macrea. The laird, however, is another matter. Depend upon it, he will not like to find his river practically void of the sea-trout and salmon he is coming north to capture, and so intestine war may soon arise.

Meantime, under the golden sunshine and the blue beauty of the scene, the village stalwarts sit and smoke and gossip while their wives work. A minister of Lochgillean many years ago, in reporting upon the social and fiscal state of his flock, declared that "idleness was almost the only comfort they enjoyed." One might say the same of these villagers, with the substantial addition of magnificent if not florid health, and sundry grievances whose removal would put their tongues at a loss.

They do not see many visitors here, a fact which explains their marked curiosity about the few who come. Now and then a vagrant young gentleman arrives at the inn, for the fishing, but the tendency is for him to hurry elsewhere after scornfully staring at the bare legs and thatched huts round about him. The fishing

is indifferent and the village smells are strong. The inn is an ancient house flanked by mean and mouldy cots which let loose many children, who gape at the stranger and follow him about with whispered remarks, critical and admiring. The schoolmaster, a handsome whiskered man, fully mindful of his university education of thirty years ago, does his best on these occasions to divert the ruder instincts of his flock. It is excellent to see him first sweep off his hat in too courteous salutation of the tourist and then break into Gaelic denunciations of the youngsters. These fly smiling before him, the more intelligent of the boys, like enough, in the direction of the dominie's own snug nest apart from the village, his absence from which gives them at least a chance of raiding the raspberries, currants, and green embryonic apples of his garden ; others, if the day be warm, to snatch a dip in the loch, with the lassies sitting afar off on land in respectful envy of man's enterprise. On very hot days it is no uncommon thing to come upon a small regiment of the boys in the uniform of Adam marching up the road (the school is at the end of the village) with sticks on their shoulders for muskets, chanting a warrior's song while the lassies clap their hands to the show. The dominie, good easy man, sees nothing reprehensible in such sport. He even condones the occasional spoiling of his garden when this is not carried out under his very eyes. "They've all their troubles before them," he says on this subject, "and hunger's a harder master than I have any wish to be, puir laddies. Ay, and I was one myself once, yes, indeed."

The laird, who comes north only for the killing of stags, grouse, and fish, knows little about the village's battle for even the first necessities of existence. He is an Englishman, like so many lairds nowadays, and does not understand the Celtic-Norse temperament which seems to compel these people to half-starve at home rather than go boldly into the world and earn man's wages elsewhere. So the minister says, and the dominie. The minister dines once a year with his lairdship in the grouse month, and then edges in sympathetic words about rents and advisable concessions to the needy. Something generous always ensues, but the laird's impatience with the foolishness of people who seem wilfully blind to the world's opportunities is just as constant. And there is always also that irritant of what he reasonably enough terms the poaching of his waters. What is he to make of God-fearing rascals who plot to take his salmon and sea-trout

even while they stride from the chapel door in their Sabbath black, with the minister's last prayer (a long and eloquent one for certain) still echoing in their ears? It irritates him still more that they do not get decently out of the way of his motor-car, (themselves, their womenfolk, and their poultry) when he toots down that street of hovels fronting the loch. Nor do they bend their strong lazy heads to him, nor doff their bonnets, with anything like the air of inevitability which he has perhaps the right to expect from them. He is a somewhat new laird, and has not taken pains to study the Highland character. The remark may indeed be hazarded that in these matters he is on a par with Mr. Creevey's friend Western, who confessed that he knew as little of history, even of his own country, "as any gentleman need do." There are lairds and lairds, and he belongs rather to the numerous body between the two categories.

The poverty in the village is very genuine. They do not beg, save in the dumb appeal of their pinched and wrinkled faces, which are yet consistent with health and energy. Their pride and lack of practice in the art deter them. They leave this to the shameless vagabond tinkers who set their wigwams in the woods lower down the loch side and come whining softly at the stranger with outstretched hands, and later ask even the cottars for one or two of the dried cuddies which fringe their thatch. But anything they can earn on a fair pretext is a Godsend to them. The other day, for example, I was followed a long mile by a meek old woman with enormous feet who wondered if I might be needing a pair of home-spun stockings. That was how she expressed it, reflectively, while she stroked the grey hairs on her chin and viewed the quiet design of the hose I chanced to be wearing. Her husband, a joiner as much or little as anything else, had, she said, a week ago conceived just that notion: "Maybe the gentleman could do with a pair of stockings, or some yards of cloth." Since then she had waited her opportunity, and now she had summoned up courage to stalk me to a standstill. They were astonishing stockings when they came, a pattern of sunsets and rainbows on a green ground; but the comfort in the old lady's eyes as she took the money was some compensation for their impossible garishness. She confessed, when coaxed, that she was in debt for meal to the grocer, like everyone else: "But I'll be easier in my mind the noo," she added. It is in this village by the loch just a little as it was

throughout Scotland in 1476, when an Act of Parliament ran in preamble, "Because victuals are right scant within the country and the most supportation that the Realm has is by strangers of diverse nations that bring victuals, &c., &c." The supportation of strangers does not work here so directly as amid the fancy landscapes of the Trossachs and on the main touring-routes ; but it works, as witness the alien laird and the alien integers who come to the inn and go thence holding their noses after paying their dues.

Of course not more than a particle or so of the old clan feeling now survives even in this remote village. Three hundred years ago it was a typical little barrack of fillibusters, all ready at a word to follow the local chieftain anywhere. A few miles south of the other side of the loch lay the hill country of their dearly-beloved enemy and nearest neighbour clan, with a sea-loch of their own from which boats sailed forth and round into our loch to fight for fighting's sake, a compliment which was promptly requited when the weather and want of other engagements permitted. Tradition tells of the bloodshed in these bouts. At one time the largest galley of the other clan had the ill-luck to get pinned on a rock at the mouth of our loch, with more than threescore cursing and fully armed warriors in it. Then did our men swarm round that hapless shipload of their foes and enjoy themselves. They picked them off at their leisure, either on the rock itself or in the water, with much ungallant abuse of their victims and their victims' ancestry. They were not so civilised here as in the Glenorchy lands farther south, whose lord in that same century commanded all his householders to furnish themselves with the preposterous and burdensome luxury of a kail-yard for red kail, white kail, and onions. The king's warrant was then something to smile at on this loch-side. Who was the king, pray, unless their own great man gave him a certificate of character ? Their own great man was idol and Providence in one. Blood of their blood, they lived for him and on him, with merely casual appeals to the sea for its herrings and the land for a sufficiency of meal, with mutton, beef, and venison when their lord willed, or the fortunes of war favoured.

And now the descendants of these men exist here like the stranded relics of an old time. The intermediate centuries have given them schools, vaccination, and a freedom from dependence which even yet they do not know what to do with. It is dinned

into their unwilling ears by kinsfolk in half a dozen colonies and the manufacturing towns of the south that they ought to be doing better for themselves, but they seem to receive the information only with puckered lips and doubts. They are so pledged to the shopkeeper for flour, sugar, and sundries that they are morally bound to the soil on the loch-side. With their sons it is different. These make their way on to one or other of the world's highroads, and succeed or fail as may hap. There is the blacksmith, with one lad a doctor in London, another an engineer in Glasgow, a third thriving in New Zealand, and a fourth who has just sent home from British Columbia a nugget of gold which his old father has paraded up and down the village this week past with a high white head. Only the other day one of these Glasgow immigrants from the loch-side came home with distressing abruptness. He was the sole son of his mother, a mutched old lady with a wrinkled yellow face, and went south to keep the home alive upon his Glasgow earnings. Suddenly he fell from a ladder and broke his neck, and four days later, in long procession, the village escorted his white coffin with the cheap gilding on it to the churchyard alongside the manse. He had left money for just this journey if the fate befell him, and his tottering old mother welcomed his body as the last good thing she could now expect from life. This much only of the old clan spirit remains in the village; its exiles determine to rest after death with their forefathers and not amid the nameless crowds of a town.

One day the handsomest and most daring of the fishermen gave me a call with a brace of fine sea-trout which he sought to sell. There was policy in his visit, as well as commerce and courtesy. He is the afore-mentioned Tammas Macrea's own brother-in-law and declared champion against the water-bailiffs, whom he has challenged in the good old style to come between him and what he considers his rightful prey in the harvest of the sea. He it is who arranges for the disposal of the packed salmon and trout when these make bulk, and many village homes look to him for their maintenance. A superb physical specimen is he, with the eyes of an eagle under his black hair and dark blue bonnet. He had some questions to ask when our transaction was concluded. Begging to be excused for his inquisitiveness, he desired to know about my politics. Was I by chance a Radical? It was just a little pathetic, however, to come

at his interpretation of that forceful word. He knew and cared next to nothing about the programme of Westminster's representative Radicals ; all he saw in the word was its battle cry for men like himself and his brother freebooters, who retain or have acquired the simple belief that it is not just for lairds and the law to say, "Thou shalt not take white fish from the sea." He was pardonably anxious moreover that I should not inform the laird of the considerable trafficking in these same white fish which went on in the village. His arguments were of course plausible, and he was extremely picturesque in the fine heat with which he elaborated them. He regarded lairds as little better than tyrants. Who but this laird and his predecessors, he enquired, had to be thanked (that is, execrated) for the decay of the village ? In the lifetime of my visitor's father herring-boats were actually built on the loch-side and sold as far north as Stornaway. But such industry did not suit the laird of that day who, wanting no sound of hammers in his valley, crippled the industry so that it died. And now there were the deer. A man could not wander about the mountains without meeting a surly loon strung with a telescope who turned him back in his master's name. All the fresh-water lochs and the very burns were also under the control of these same loons. A stranger like myself might get permission to fish them, but a villager by no means. It was an article of faith with the laird (and with all lairds, my visitor believed) that the native-born were to be persecuted out of existence, or at least out of the homes which they had inherited from their forefathers. "They treat us," he said, "as if we were trespassers in the land that gave us birth. I'm telling you the truth, they do." And so on, and so on. After the interview he strode off cheerfully, having given me his hand and the assurance of his conviction that, if I was not exactly a Radical of his kind, I was well disposed towards him and his principles.

Well disposed ? One could hardly be aught else in the abstract. It was when, with the laird's permission, I fished in the laird's own tidal river and caught nothing worth a turn of the reel that the other side of the picture came very much home to me. That morning more than a hundred sea-trout, weighing from half a pound up to three pounds apiece, had been hoisted from the salt water within a stone's throw of the mouth of that once famous stream. There had been handsome rain for a

week, and by all portents the fish ought to have got into the river and the fresh-water loch three miles up the valley. But it was never a one for me ; and the laird's own son, installed at the lodge with his rod betimes, had spent a whole week for a single salmon, and that only a six-pounder. The laird's head-keeper and the laird's son both talked heatedly about necks which deserved twisting ; and the former especially, being a man of a distant clan, hoped with all his heart that his master would stand no nonsense with the rogues. That bullet in Tammas Macrea had been richly paid for with these months of unhindered poaching. A doughty fellow was this head-keeper, with the tuft of pine in his bonnet to declare his primary devotion to the Grants of Speyside. He would risk much to reinstate the laird's dignity in the land, and had little sympathy with the Southron weakness which, on the Tammas Macrea news, had bidden the laird write to his men not to establish a blood feud ; better a little lawlessness than that. Hoots ! one may die worse deaths than fighting. This doughty headkeeper was built on the mould of that Captain Lamont of the Black Watch who bewailed the hardship of his lot in going out of the world in his bed "like a manufacturer" ; he loved a mellay for its own sake.

But, on the other hand, a contrast of the laird's luxury, even in his Highland lodge, with the privations of my poor friends the Macs of the village, was enough and more to make me half the Radical that leading Macrea would have had me be. I was in the cabin of one Sandy Macrea in the morning, and that same afternoon was shown the glories of what to the laird was a mere pleasure-box for a month or two in the year. Sandy's cabin was warranted three hundred years old, and still had for a chimney only a hole in the thatch of the kind which authorities on Highland domestic architecture used to think so fine an aid to the seasoning of timber and so sound a preventive of rheums, catarrhs, and fevers. I could not stand upright in Sandy's parlour, and could just touch its side walls at the same time. Ceiling and walls were papered with newspapers, some of mid-Victorian days. The floor was black earth hardened by the tread of Sandy's boots and his grey-haired sister's feet. There was a small niche in the parlour for the lady of the house to sleep in ; and Sandy himself snored o' nights in the handsbreadth of shedding the other side of the wall. The house had but this

one room, in fact, which was kitchen as well as parlour ; though inasmuch as breakfast and supper consisted of only a small bowl of stirabout apiece, and dinner what sea-fish Sandy could take in a borrowed boat, the room was more parlour than kitchen. No rent was paid for the cabin, which had bred Macreas unceasingly since the time of Queen Elizabeth ; and on earnest calculation Sandy thought that maybe he and his sister spent on their joint maintenance from half-a-crown to three shillings a week. They looked marvellous well on it too, and asked for not much better than the power to make sure of just those two or three weekly shillings.

But there was the rub. Save these nocturnal catches of white fish in the loch, Sandy had not a resource in the world, and it was only in the rare coming of a visitor to the village that Sandy's sister could earn a trifle as a laundress. Yet the contentment of this couple of middle-aged happy-go-luckies ! They rejoiced in the beauty of the outlook from their slit of a door and peephole of a window as if they were emotional cockneys among the mountains for but a fortnight. They were nigh above the fish smells of the village, and they rejoiced also in the nettles and clover of the green slope from their cottage door. The distant hills, the nearer water, and the pageants of sunrise and sunset, were, so the sister declared with bright eyes, daily sights better to them than salt to their brose. And hap what might, both of them wanted no more of life than the privilege of just existing as they did until it was time to die in the little house, which could in the past have served only as a sort of hutch at night-time for a larger family. The laird, said Sandy's sister, part mirthful and part indignant, had tried to persuade Sandy to go to a town, and set up as a painter. But why on earth should he do the likes o' that foolishness, Sandy's sister mocked, when he was so well off where he was, and in his own country moreover, where everybody respected him ?

It was good to gossip with such contentment in the midst of what would seem unbearable poverty in Poplar or Shoreditch. There it would mean not only poverty, but degradation and the world's contempt. To Sandy Macrea and his sister there was no shadow of such a fear. They laughed at the smallness of their porridge-bowls and put their trust in Providence. It was as if they had been brought up on Jean Paul Richter, as well as the irreducible minimum of nourishment for health, strength, and

spirits. "What," asks Richter, "is poverty, that a man should moan under it? It is but like the pain of piercing the ears of a maiden, and you hang precious jewels in the wound." I gather that the minister of Sandy's kirk preaches pretty often on this same text. But he need not trouble even to do that for these two. Sandy and his sister have a priceless dower of resignation and dignity of their own, nor would I for a small bribe offer either of them a half-crown except on some specious pretext of a reciprocal service.

And from Sandy's cabin, in an hour or two, I found myself at the laird's lodge, a little palace of grey granite, with leaded extinguisher turrets and every modern luxury inside. The mountains rise like a cleft wall behind it, so that with the naked eye one might see a stag if it chose to perch on the summit of the topmost precipice, three thousand feet above the grapes in the lodge conservatories. And the stags often do so choose, in the summer, though in the winter there are sheltered glens and corries enough for them in the many square miles of mountain and valley over which the laird reigns triumphant. Dark brooding crags, the crashing of white waters from their midst, thick woods of pine and fir, the shining river in the valley, the silver pool of the nearest loch, and gardens teeming with fruit are here at the service of the laird when it pleases him to enjoy them. The rhododendron makes banks of many colours by the roadside and in the lodge woods. There are hedges of fuchsia by the lawns, rosaries that astonish in such a latitude, rustic summer-houses on little beauty-spots, rotting raspberries in the garden of a size the village dominie's caterans would hardly believe possible, ripe strawberries enough for a village, and a very prince of kail-yards in which every vegetable seems the candidate for a prize-show. Glass-houses also are there, where grapes, peaches, nectarines, plums, pears, and purple figs are all ready in a moment to put on the very bloom of perfection for their master's pleasure; acres of glass, screening such good things in such abundance that I do not wonder to hear that much of it all rots like the raspberries.

I was admiring the tortured ingenuity of the apple-trees, loaded with fruit in this lavish garden, when a sudden "Look!" drew my attention to the mountains. It was the laird's pet eagle. The fiat has gone forth in this as in other Highland territories that the king of birds is no longer to be

shot like a pirate pest, but cherished. The laird's eagle has its eyrie among the sheer crags above the lodge, and is wont to float at its ease in the air between the mountain-top and the turret of his benefactor. There is also now a mate to him, and eaglets are expected. Local opinion does not run at all even with the laird's on the interesting subject of his strong-pinioned favourite. The farmers of course send in claims for lambs. His lairdship's keepers are at one with the farmers in their detestation of that composed shape drifting so tranquilly out of gunshot in the blue upper air. They wonder what the laird can be thinking about. He might, in their ignorant belief, as sensibly welcome grouse-disease, or the small-pox. It is not as if the birds merely take toll of the lambs, with now and then a very young calf to their names also ; their feud with the hinds and their young in the mountains is just as resolute, and would, with most lairds, be a deciding mark against them. But our own particular laird does not heed that, and so the eagles here are to live just as nature bids them.

From the lodge and its surprising grounds I ascend into the mountains by that white torrent. There are little lochs full of fish high up, and I am permitted to look at them. The track in this savage and very contracted stairway is as smooth and firm as a park walk. There are, I discover, miles and miles of other tracks in the hollows between the mountains, where the lochs with their pink and white sanded shores are now consecrated entirely to the deer. "Ay, they're the old foot-roads, but they're not used now. You see, it's all in the forest," is the information I receive from my verderer guide. Asked if he would prevent a Macrea of my village from crossing the glen at our feet by the ribbon of road which is still so very white and broad, the verderer is very positive on the point. He would not trouble himself in the winter, when no sane Macrea would be after taking such a short cut through the mountains ; but in the summer, with the shooting-season at hand, he'd like to see the Macrea or the Mac-anything who would escape his vigilance. "Would you knock him down if he refused to keep off the road his forefathers' feet made ?" I ask, rather flamboyantly. The verderer did not think the law empowered him to go quite so far. He would however tell the rascal what he thought of him, take his name and report him ; and if he was a tenant of the laird's at the time he might as well thereafter shift without waiting to be sent

about his business. The verderer had, naturally, more sympathy with his master's potentiality and privileges than with the limited life-horizon of the neighbouring Macreas.

And so down to the laird's garden again, whence, having eaten a Sforza fig and an Emperor plum, I return to the little village on the loch, its penury and its smells. That is a curious inference of Dr. Sven Hedin's in his book *Across Asia* where he says : "The glen was both wild and picturesque, the mountain scenery being on an imposing scale ; consequently the people who inhabit it were frank, cheerful, and liberal-minded." These loch-side villagers live surrounded by just such landscape charms, but like the Corsicans and other mountain-bred folk of my acquaintance, they fail in those very qualities which, according to Dr. Hedin, belong to their birthright. They are too much in bondage to the tyranny of their heart-strings for one thing, and too instinctively intelligent for another. A village full of half-brained fools might do well here if they were poor feeders, but discontent must ever be the portion of a hundred or two average Macreas, in spite of the counterpoising and rather sombre charm of an ancestral atmosphere. The laird in the midst of his splendour and purchased powers never can be loved by these unwelcome hangers-on to his coat-tails unless he resolves to sink his own interests in the very troubled lake of theirs.

And that of course is where the difficulty in these modern, as in most other, days happens to lie. The spirit of the times must rule predominant. Our own particular laird would be accounted mad if he dismissed his gamekeepers, bade the Macreas of the village take the white fish at their will, and encouraged them to increase and multiply and enjoy the rather mystic pleasures of a life of abstinence and idleness. He would do anything in reason to save the life of one of these poor, and perhaps lazy, sentimentalists, but why cannot they see that his nor any man's coat-tails were made for such abject clinging ? Where is their common sense, their manhood even ?

If all these loch-side Macreas were such blithe Stoics in indigence as Sandy and his sister in their inherited kennel, one might meet the question comfortably. No matter for their sense or manhood, one might retort ; let them stay where they are and receive half-a-crown a week or so per household from the State as models for a newer and very economical scheme of Poor Relief whereby existing workhouses may be broken up, and the

country, as distinct from the towns, be peopled afresh and thus be more closely cultivated. But that were impossible. The pride of the Macreas will help them to bear much privation, but it forbids them to accept doles. If they were thus endowed, I can fancy them throwing their weekly half-crowns to the servants of the laird up the glen, as better accustomed to the receipt of alms. The Black Watch, who were sent south to be exhibited to George the Second at St. James's Palace, did something of that kind with the guineas the monarch gave them in approval of their inches and costume. It is in the blood of people whose simplicity and devotion to their native spot is so extreme as theirs. And so, with the laird himself, one can only wish them well while they are alive, but no sons and daughters as simple as themselves.

CHARLES EDWARDES

A VILLAGE TRAGEDY

DOWN through a hot haze sinks the sun, on his way to peep through the cloudy skies of our cold home-land in the far West. The thought makes one long for a shiver,—other than those foretelling fever—for a fire and the need of it, even for the choking, evil smell of a London fog, and the oozy mud on its pavements. Here the still air quivers with heat, as though the rich earth were palpitating from the too ardent embraces of her lover the sun. Against the deepening blue of the sky tall palms and clumps of feathery bamboo show their graceful outline above the grey-green gloom of the lower mass of foliage. Below us the last rays of departing light linger in a golden mist on flooded rice-fields and the river that wins its way, through rifts in the hilly ridges, to the open plains and distant sea. All around broods a peaceful quiet, a calm content that induces an indescribable mood in which the past vanishes, the future withdraws in a rosy cloud, all things drop away, and it sufficeth to be alive to feel the glory of all things. Truly is it a Lotus land !

This night the dream lasts exactly so long as the sunset. When the globe of molten heat has disappeared, as the grey haze darkens to a livid purple that loses itself in the unfathomable blue above, the buzz of sound from the village, hidden in deep shadow below, recalls one to things actual. It holds a surfeit of life, that strange, as yet uncomprehended life in the midst of which Fate has placed us. Will one ever comprehend it ? One cannot but ask oneself this question as a tinkle from the bells of the neighbouring monastery echoes over the valley, and yellow-robed figures hurry past through the lengthening shadows. Every Burman dons the yellow robe of the monk for some portion of his life, be it but a day, and this is the Buddhist Lent, when monasteries are filled with the pious and youth of the

land. The fast ends shortly, and already preparations have commenced in the village for the feast to follow.

Yet, after all, down there, in those wooden houses and bamboo huts, runs on the tale of life in endless circles of birth to death, as in the Western lands beyond the sunset, only with sharper contrasts. Here the calm is more ineffable, the passion more violent, and both, withal, more transient, the paradox more contradictory. One page in the life-stories of our district has fixed my interest. Stripped of its local appendages there is nothing new in it ; it is only the age-long tale of December warming to a simulated heat over the charms of May.

December, in this case, is assuredly an old reprobate, and when the over-worked Official, who represents Fate to me, first mentioned this village drama, all my sympathies were reserved for May. They were wasted seemingly. Yesterday I saw her in all the glory of a new silk petticoat. My Burmese will not yet go far, but we manage, woman-wise, to gossip after a fashion. She was not at all averse to display her new finery and tell of its acquisition. The silk, of a complicated pattern, fine texture, and brilliant colouring, came from Mandalay. At the name Mee Hla giggled ; a gleam of white teeth showed between the crimson lips, and the dark eyes flashed mischievous meanings. The point was that all the village knows old Moung Gouk has but recently returned from Thebaw's city.

Moung Gouk makes periodical expeditions, nominally to trade, but my Official let drop the other day that he was one with the village in misdoubting this information, and that there are whispers of how, in the old days before the country was settled, Moung Gouk had been one of the leaders of a band of dacoits, under a noted chief, and had harried the country for miles round. When the British officials came and the gang dispersed, Moung Gouk, with Boer-like cunning, returned to the village and settled down to a life of unimpeachable respectability ; but rumour has it that spoils of past raids are hidden in some secluded jungle fastness, and that Moung Gouk's departures are to disinter portions of his booty. Certainly the very limited supply of carving and lacquer work that he takes with him on these occasions would not alone account for his general air of well-being on his return. Everyone knows him to be the laziest man in the village (which is saying much in Burmah), yet he never lacks for anything, and lately, since his elderly fancy

fixed upon young Mee Hla, he has paraded about in unusual and unexcelled splendour of attire ; while the presents he offers to the village beauty are as costly as they are varied, and far surpass the usual gifts presented by local swains.

Mee Hla accepts his presents with the most fascinating of smiles, and his attentions with provoking calm. This much I understand, and also that, after all, Mee Hla knows her own business best, young as she is, and can apparently take care of herself. None the less must one pity any girl with youth, high spirits, and beauty, should she fall to the share of that old scoundrel Gouk.

Another factor in the drama is Mee Thaw Hehn, the beauty's mother. Burmese married women age very rapidly, and a girl of twenty summers, who has had three or four children, would compare badly with an English matron who might have as many grandchildren. Yet, even knowing this, it is startling to realise such a wrinkled hag can be the mother of pretty Mee Hla. Mee Thaw Hehn is not a prepossessing old woman. Her tongue is loud and unceasing, her voice harsh ; she henn-pecks her easy-going husband, and gives one the impression of being a bad specimen of the domestic tyrant. The question suggests itself how much of Mee Hla's treatment of her elderly beau may be due to the older woman's influence, if the mother can be forcing the girl to marry that lump of senile rascality. A mercenary match is no new or surprising event, after all ; but among this scenery, so remote from the conventional, it jars. It is a note too discordant, too crude, for the land of silken lovers, when one has not yet penetrated beneath the glamour and found the same old dull humanity hidden in novelty's romance.

The lights in the village have disappeared, and our Eastern love-tale has led to most Occidental moralising. In the immensity above multitudes of clear, cold star-points regard me reproachfully. For a space, then, if the gods be kind, may we go by the gates of sleep, to wander through green English meadows flecked with purple shadows cast by soft white clouds that sail across the grey-blue skies, in dreams as fleeting as the shadows ; until the hot glare of Eastern day recalls us to the monotonous routine of our exile life.

Our quiet village has been in a state of wild excitement. Monotony, for once, did not await us ; tragedy has thrown its

dark shadow over the valley, and passion has evoked death to play a part.

The final act of the drama opened two days ago at the big show held to celebrate the feast for which all the preparations had been adoing. It was a gay show. The Deputy Commissioner came in, and we all went to look on at this (to me) fresh phase of village life.

Mee Hla was there, of course, very resplendent in her Mandalay silks, and jewels which roused envious glances from other village maidens. The envy was by no means lost on the conceited little beauty as she strutted in her peacock splendour with the peculiar swing affected by all Burmese belles. Moung Gouk hovered near with a heavy scowl on his never beautiful countenance. Only that morning he had given his inamorata the necklace that sparkled against her graceful, dusky throat. The gift won him but the curtest of thanks ; and to make matters worse the fickle fair was now flirting openly with a young Burman in English dress who had accompanied the Deputy Commissioner, and even throwing coquettish glances at the great man himself. And what was worst of all, the whole village knew his disappointment, for in his pride and assurance he had sought a degree of publicity in making this latest and costliest gift. Now though publicity is by no means foreign to sentiment in this land where everything is public, from birth to death, from waking to sleeping, in this case publicity entailed ridicule, and Moung Gouk's angry soul presupposed mockery on every smiling face. For the first, and only, time I felt sorry for the man ; his infatuation was so evident, and, in its way, so genuine, while the spoiled beauty had not a look for him.

All this little by-play drew my attention from the entertainment, a marionette show, and good of its kind. Yet the village puppets in our corner of life's great stage were better worth watching ; for one caught a hint of possible tragedy from Moung Gouk's lowering countenance, and vaguely wondered what it all meant, if it meant anything, or whether the prosaic would predominate.

Seemingly it was to be the latter, for, when the young Burman left, Mee Hla turned to her elderly admirer with a cleverly affected start of surprise to find him waiting in such close attendance. He was rewarded with a most charming smile, and an air of satisfied proprietorship succeeded his angry

discontent as he listened to the naughty beauty's quips and jests at the company and the show. Our Chief, however, about this time declaring a preference for some less local entertainment, we returned to our bungalow, and the methods and manners of Europe.

Yesterday Mee Hla strolled up to pay me one of her periodic visits. She came with overflowing smiles, and puffing energetically at a huge cheroot, to bring me some lovely sprays of orchids and fragrant camellias, very different from the waxy, scentless blossoms of English conservatories. In the girl's dark hair I recognised an uncommon flower that her Burman admirer had worn in his button-hole on the previous night. Mee Hla intercepted my glance as it fell from the flower in her hair to Moung Gouk's gift round her neck. She laughed long and merrily. "He big old fool," she said in laboured English, with a saucy shake of her little brown head. As two days ago Mee Hla knew no English, it was obvious that the original owner of the flower had taught her this the day before. Then, with much laughter, she continued her tale.

Moung Gouk, it appeared, tired of uncertainty and spurred on as much by the possibility of a rival as by her subsequent encouragement, grew bold, urged matrimony, and with confident temerity appealed to her mother. Old Me Thaw Hehn made no bones about it, but shrilly told the discomfited applicant she would have none such as he for son-in-law. Flirt he might, an he so liked and Mee Hla choose to permit it ; gifts he might bring in return for such condescension on the part of the young beauty ; but marriage—there should be no more of such nonsense with so well-known and disreputable an old scamp as he. Again and again Mee Hla laughed at the recollection of the scene, and repeated, "He big old fool, big old fool."

It was impossible to scold that pretty irresponsible child, or do other than laugh with her. As Me Thaw Hehn put it, old scamps must expect to pay for the privilege of flirting with young beauty, and to go further and be in earnest was presumption meriting punishment. So Mee Hla's rippling laugh rang out unchecked as she re-examined my English fancy-work and the knick-knacks of a work-basket that never failed to rouse in her a spirit of tolerant curiosity. Then she tasted some newly-arrived Paris bonbons with undisguised approval. The adjective is needless ; everything

about the girl was unaffected and natural ; even the elaborate fibs she occasionally favoured me with were such palpable untruths that their futility was only exceeded by their limitless scope and flow.

All the morning the child proved a more entertaining companion than usual. She was set upon acquiring English ways and phrases. Evidently the young official had made considerable, if transient, impression on her fickle little heart. When at length she passed down my garden, a lithe, bright figure against the purple line of bougainvillia hedge, I watched, with a smile for the beauty and petulance of this spoiled darling of life's sun-land, before resuming my work with a sigh for the lost irresponsibilities of my own youth.

Night fell with nothing of the unusual to mark one hour from another. The sounds from the village waned to silence. My Official still wrestled with an uncommonly heavy mail, but the land and the people thereof slept in the covering darkness.

Suddenly, in the village below, a bright flame leaped into the air and lit up the surrounding bamboo houses. Another wicked red tongue flickered up through the blackness, another and another, now accompanied by shrill cries. Dark against the flame-lit doorway stood a tall figure ; there was a flash of fire-light on steel ; a woman's scream rang out in the silence ; another figure rushed out frantically from the doomed dwelling, and again the dark form loomed out from the shadows, again came the flash of a falling weapon, a struggle, and yells of terror and pain.

And now the whole village had roused. From the clearly illuminated houses poured forth an eager and excited crowd. More screams followed, more struggles, and that deadly flash of wicked steel heliographing a tragedy to the silent watchers of the night. It was horrible, indescribable, unearthly, as though the darkness had parted suddenly to disclose a nightmare Gehenna.

But this was no nightmare, no dream of distorted imagination. The flames roared higher, a burst of sparks flew upwards in a brilliant shower of ruddy glory. Then the house collapsed ; the light died to a hot red glow, amidst which the moving figures swayed mysteriously ; a babble of excited tongues replaced the shrieks ; the tragedy sank into a mere village fire, no rare occurrence. Then a breathless messenger came running up.

There were trouble and murder in the village ; His Honour's presence was required.

The tragedy proved to be the sequel of the story told with so much laughter a few hours before. Smarting with the wrath bred of wounded vanity and frustrated desire, Moung Gouk left the village after his interview with Me Thaw Hehn and her daughter. He departed muttering threats of vengeance, whilst Me Thaw Hehn stood in the doorway and shook an angry fist at his retreating form, and Mee Hla's peals of laughter found many echoes from the more youthful beaux who witnessed and jeered at his discomfiture. Nothing had been seen of the old man all day, but a passing priest afterwards told of an encounter with an angry, red-faced man in the neighbouring jungle, armed with two swords, with which he slashed furiously at the surrounding trees, shrieking curses and crying, "Kill, kill, kill !"

None had guessed that this was old Moung Gouk working his rage to a fine frenzy. Under cover of the darkness he had crept back to the village. To fire the dry bamboo roof of Me Thaw Hehn's house was easy work. When the sleepers, roused by the heat and glare, hurried out, they were met in the doorway by a furious onslaught from the maddened incendiary. A cut over the head had flung the old mother back, mortally wounded, on to the blazing woodwork, and a second thrust of the deadly weapon cut down the terrified girl. Yelling abuse and curses, the madman stamped upon the quivering limbs, and stabbed again and again before the hastily aroused villagers could rush in, knock him down, and drag the other half-suffocated victims from the burning building before the flaming roof fell through.

So runs a tale of passion, tragedy, and death in this village I had deemed a veritable Sleepy Hollow. And this is a glimpse beneath the fair outward show of contentment and indifference that pervades this land, like the soft green scum and metallic sheen on the surface of stagnant waters.

D.

MUSICIANS

(BY ONE WHO HAS SUFFERED)

WHAT an existence of moods and perplexities is that of man ! In what diverse and strange ways does he occupy himself during his brief stay on this little planet ! Yet there is one path which nearly all humanity treads. Here, in a large, probably dimly-lighted hall, is a crowd of men and women wrapped in silence, listening to one of their species loudly crying, lowering and then heightening his tones, grading and measuring out his sounds, in an effort to produce a vague quantity known as melody. Again, in some back lane you see a man, with swollen cheeks, blowing into a tapering, funnel-like instrument, and assiduously pressing certain keys with his fingers ; he also is in search of melody. You see another man caressing what seems a piece of daintily fashioned wood, with three or four strings drawn tightly across its front. He puts one end of this thing beneath his chin, draws a long wand backwards and forwards across the strings, and produces strange, and on rare occasions entrancing, sounds. Meanwhile he gazes vacantly at a small sheet on which are lines, and dots, and dashes.

All mankind is in pursuit of melody, and more often than not it is a heart-breaking chase. What a spectacle man presents to his faithful dog or cat as he exercises his lungs, or ill-treats his piano, or wears down the strings of his violin, all in the conception of this uncertain melody ! What can your cat think of it all as he sits watching you with that half-amused quizzical wink of his ? 'Tis true that our soft friends have sometimes little concerts of their own at an uncomfortable hour in the dead of night, but then their music is a chance outcome of the meeting. The concert is only an accident with the cat ; it is man alone who classifies sound, produces combinations of it,

regulates its length and variety, calls it music, and imposes it in the street, in the hall, and in the home.

It is not an easy thing for the ordinary man to define music. The ordinary man, however, is not held as entitled to an opinion, and therefore has not the unhappiness of trying to find an answer to the riddle.

If a man wants to be looked upon as one who has the privilege of saying on behalf of his average brother what music is, then, by some uncertain means, he gets himself recognised as a critic. Once a critic, everything is easy. The critic has fixed ideas and doctrines on the subject, for which, more than likely, he can give no genuine reason, and everything fitting in with those ideas is music. Anything which runs contrary to those particular doctrines, or comes from some one the critic does not like, is not, and never can be, music, no matter what any other critic may say.

Every man, unless nature has utterly unfitted him, is a musician in some degree. He begins to show his gifts in this way very soon after his entrance into this puzzling world. His song is as yet untutored, wild, and inharmonious, but here are all the elements that may make for cultured music. The baby is a bully ; he soon finds out how surely his song of appealing force,—sheer brute force—strikes at the hearts of the gracious beings about him, and there are few pianissimo passages with him. The baby grows apace, begins to walk, catches stray fragments of popular songs from his nurse, and combines with others to make violent noises. Soon he goes to school. A big man stands in front of a long chart, and the boy commences the scientific study of music. The teacher spends much time in making varied sounds, and the poor child is requested to say what note the teacher thinks he has sung. Some fine day the boys and girls wake up to find themselves men and women. For the great majority of them music will never be an art, but it may be a solace, and on they go towards their goal, wherever it be, humming and whistling, and now and again in some inspired moment opening to the fuller swell of song. Thus far, but no farther !

Yet a few go farther, and then we get the phenomenon of professionals and amateurs. The amateur is one, man or woman, who performs at social meetings mostly for charitable purposes, and gets his or her friends to lead the applause. The

professional is one who travels from city to city, and, according to the newspapers, from success to success. The male distinguishes himself from the amateur by his dignity, his grandiose bow, and his self-possession ; the female simpers at the audience, curtseys prettily, and does not know the meaning of the word *encore* unless there are at least three separate rounds of applause.

Again, there are subdivisions of the main classes. The basso is a small man whose opening note startles everyone by its profundity. He seems hollow, his frame a shell fitted to produce deep notes. The tenor is a big, burly man with a fierce moustache, and his voice sounds as if led by a slender silver pipe from the interior of a solid body. Baritone is the name given to a male singer when you are doubtful as to the quality of his performance. A comedian is a person whom the audience laughs at from a sense of duty ; he is clean shaven, and in private life is sad-eyed and melancholy ; his favourite headgear is a brown wideawake hat, encircled by a black band. The instrumentalist is a human being who sometimes, by artificial means, attains a measure of harmony, after a long and wearying period in which his friends suffer a time of trouble such as the victims of the Chinese torture-chamber never knew.

A member of a lowly branch of the professional division is he whose stage is the common roadway and whose critic is the man in the street. The street musician is a lonely, a unique, and a ragged figure, an outcast from the kinship of his sleek brethren who move in more gilded circles. He, in his way, scorns the pampered existence of his rich relations. His passion is for the people,—music for the people, not for the bored, bedecked, be-scented few who sit in the half-sovereign seats. The artist of the halls is under the bondage of etiquette and of the manager, while he is as free as the wind, the clouds, and the rushing river. He is a mystery who glides as a phantom through life. He seems to come from nowhere and to go nowhere. The aim of the professional of the music-hall is to get as many as possible to pay to hear and see him ; the aim of the street-professor is to persuade as many as possible to pay him to go away.

You meet the flute-player in the evening when the lamps cast deep shadows on the streets. You become sympathetic ; you hold out a penny, and your fingers come into touch with a cold,

lifeless hand, gloomy eyes gleam out at you from gloomy depths, and a muffled voice utters dull, jaded thanks. The piping tune again breaks forth, and the player shuffles out of sight. The organ-grinder is such a familiar specimen that his habits need not be detailed. His chief function in life is to be moved on.

Street-singers are nearly always disappointing. They mostly belong to the sentimental order, but while the sentiment and the intention are good, the music is far otherwise. One minute you seem dimly to recognise the air, but in the next you are inclined to think it is some other tune. The feeling grows upon you that you are one who knows nothing, or that the singer knows just too much to keep to one thing closely, in case he be found out. The street-singer has usually an audience of two small children immediately in front of him, a bigger boy who stands on the pavement, and a woman who looks out from a window. When he earns enough for his purpose he leaves your lane and goes by tortuous paths to the nearest house of licence. Then he vanishes in the night.

Musicians are often found in groups. There are natural and there are unnatural groups, and the unnatural are the more desirable. The principal of the natural groups are those termed musical families. Their chief object is to make as much disturbing sound as can be made in the longest possible period. The main evil arising from a thriving group is that it always includes at least one learner, who maps out a restless, unsatisfying existence for himself, and gives degeneration to the life of all around. A musical family is a menace to the community, and should be forbidden by Act of Parliament. The unnatural groups include the choir, the band, the quartette, and others. A wide field is open for original research and investigation as to the laws which govern the rise and progress of these, but, doubtless through an oversight which is a blot on our civilisation, the subject has not yet claimed its specialists.

When all is said and done, there are some fine musicians, and to hear them sing or play is to admire, indeed, almost to envy them.

GEORGE SAND'S DAUGHTER

IN 1831 the Baronne Aurore Dudevant, having arranged with her scamp of a husband for a temporary separation, came to Paris and began her literary life as George Sand. How she fared as an artist and a woman is part of the history of the romantic movement. Gifted with the rare and potent charm of which no portrait gives an idea, she passed from one love affair to another, all the while carrying on the real business of her life, the art for which she lived. But what is strange and almost disconcerting is that, interwoven with her sentimental adventures and the serious patient pursuit of her life-work, there was a third thread of her existence, a simple domestic side. Amid all her aberrations the instinct of orderly life asserted itself, and in the end overcame. She was a devoted mother. Her relations with her only son were exceptionally close and tender, and to the brilliant daughter, who inherited so much of herself, and whose history in some ways so strangely repeated her own, she was always a wise counsellor and patient friend.

The year after the great plunge Madame Sand brought up with her to Paris her little girl, three and a half years old. Solange was a splendid child, plump, pink, and fresh as a rose. She accommodated herself very quickly to the life in the flat on the Quai St. Michel. We have glimpses of her in George Sand's letters, climbing in the morning into her mother's bed, laughing and chattering in baby language, then running out on the balcony, and when she breaks the stems of some of the plants, trying to stick them together with wafers.

Solange Clésinger (*née* Dudevant-Sand) died at Paris in 1899. Even if she had not been the daughter of the greatest female writer of her time, she would have deserved to be remembered for her own sake. She had been beautiful and up to the last preserved much of her old charm, but it was her wit which drew

to her little drawing-room some of the ablest men of the day. Keen, original, biting, her conversation showed a virile strength of mind, oddly blended with the irresponsibility of a child. She was intensely proud, passionate, and exacting in friendship. There was something in her of the country girl of Berry, a good deal of the fashionable beauty of the Second Empire, and a considerable infusion of romanticism. Such as she was, she has left with those who knew her the memory of a brilliant and unhappy woman, dowered with great gifts which, through ill luck as well as defect of temperament and character, never came to full fruition.

The story of her relations with her famous mother,—relations often difficult and painful in spite of deep affection on both sides—has recently been told in a volume of letters edited with skill and taste by M. Rocheblave. It was remarked at the time of the publication of George Sand's Correspondence, edited by M. Maurice Sand, that the collection contained none of his mother's letters to Solange. The fact was that his sister was not at that moment on terms with the editor. She was supposed to have destroyed her mother's letters, but they were carefully preserved, and the most interesting of them have been published by M. Rocheblave, together with some characteristic epistles from Solange herself.

Here we see George Sand as no other side of her correspondence has revealed her. We know from her letters to Flaubert that she could be a true and magnanimous comrade: we know what she was as a mother to her son; but in her relations with her daughter,—and such a daughter, resembling her in so many ways by gifts and disposition—she appears as mother and comrade both. And there is a painful interest in the clash of temperaments inevitable between two women too much alike to be very tolerant of each other's weaknesses.

These difficulties begin early. From the year 1836 the law had put Madame Dudevant-Sand in possession of her children and her patrimonial estate of Nohant in Berry. M. Dudevant made one attempt to carry off Solange but was promptly checkmated by his wife, who pursued him to his house at Guillery and got the child back with the assistance of the strong arm of the law. "There had to be three dear little policemen," wrote the small heroine of the occasion to her brother, "to give me back to mother." After this alarm George Sand did not care

to part from her daughter. She kept her at Nohant and engaged a governess for her ; but at thirteen the young woman was too much for any governess, and her mother would not venture on the task.

There is not in my opinion [she wrote] a worse governess than a mother : we are so anxious to see our children make progress that we have not the calm and composure necessary to moderate our precepts, graduate our lessons, and, above all, compose our impatience. Besides, the mind of Solange has become too independent for me to resume a dominion over her which I had never completely exercised.

Accordingly from thirteen to fifteen Solange was an inmate of the Institution Bascans-Lagut in the Rue de Chaillot. M. Bascans was a brilliant, interesting man, and (to use a phrase of M. Rocheblave's) an impenitent Liberal well qualified to give religious instruction to Mademoiselle Dudevant-Sand, in accordance with the views of her mother.

If it entered into your views to explain to her the philosophy of Christ, to move her by the beautiful poem of the life and death of the Divine Man, to present the Gospel as the teaching of equality, in short, to comment with her those Gospels so scandalously altered in the Catholic rendering, and so admirably restored in Pierre Leroux's *Book of Humanity*, this would be the true religious instruction which I desire that she should profit by in Holy Week and all the days of her life.

Madame Bascans was a woman of great tact and moral worth, great-hearted and strong-willed. Her influence over her wayward pupil was strong and lasting, and it was to her that Solange turned for sympathy later on, in the trials of her married life.

Even in her childish letters home she reveals a very definite and singular personality. Her first essay in friendship is significant of much, as Carlyle used to say.

Dear Mother [she writes] do you advise me to have a friend among the boarders ? I have two to choose from, one who is good when one wants to laugh and play, another who is good to make one work and lecture one. [The experiment was made with the results which appear in the following extract] :—I did find a friend, Celina Higonnet, but I discovered that she was full of faults, so I gave her up. I do not think I want a friend. When I have anything to tell I will tell you. I do not see the use of having a friend when one has a mother, unless it is to play and joke with.

The whole history of Solange is foreshadowed in those words, “I found she was full of faults so I gave her up.” Critical,

impatient, inconstant, she passed through life in quest of an impossible satisfaction.

George Sand's reply to her little daughter is full of large-hearted common-sense.

When you say that when one has a mother one does not need a friend, it is very nice of you and very sweet for me, but you are wrong in thinking that you do not owe affection to anyone but to her who prefers you to all others. When one meets a person full of good qualities to whom one is drawn in friendship one should yield to that friendship. Because we love what is true, kind, just, and wise, in ideas or feelings, we should love the beings who possess these great gifts of heaven. Do not then look for a friend among your companions, as you would look in a shoemaker's shop for a shoe which did not pinch you. But when you find one who inspires you with a great esteem, get it into your head that it is God who sends you one more duty and happiness in your life.

Admirable as all this is, there were aspects of George Sand's influence which were less well adapted to promote the healthy development of a passionate and self-centred nature. Moral discipline was what the child needed, and what her mother was perfectly incapable of giving her. It is not merely the genius of George Sand, it is her possession in a high degree of certain great moral virtues, honesty, industry, generosity, and courage, which, in spite of moral lapses which would have stamped any other woman as worthless, have established her claim to respect. Yet, perhaps it was her punishment to see the daughter whom she had nourished on the theories of amiable visionaries like Pierre Leroux, whose creed was "Love your neighbour and do as you like," accepting the second clause to the neglect of the first. While still a schoolgirl, Solange was a student of her mother's novels. She had her favourites among the heroines, preferring Consuelo to Edmée in *MAUPRAT*. Times change, but our mothers would have considered *MAUPRAT* rather strong meat for a child of fourteen. At fifteen she argued with her mother on a footing of equality. The sentiment of the following letter is precociously complicated, despite its childishness.

You lay reproaches on me, dearest, which I have not deserved. You say I have an affected style. If it is so, which is quite possible, it is unintentional. It is not everybody who has your style. But do not blame me because mine is not natural. It is perhaps because it is too much so that it seems not to be. You almost say that I do not love you. But since I have seen you quietly writing a letter to Madame Perdiguier on purpose to make her cry, I have thought that you have done the same for me.

And then to grieve me more, you tell me that you are giving lessons to Luce when I am in Paris. You are not nice when you scold me.

At sixteen Solange went home to Nohant, the property of George Sand, which she had inherited from her grandmother, Aurore de Saxe. Here George Sand spent her time with her two children, writing, painting (she painted flowers beautifully), keeping up her enormous correspondence, looking after her property, and entertaining her guests, of whom Chopin was the most famous. For eight years Nohant had been the musician's home when he cared to make it so, and the mistress of the place nursed him through his constant illnesses with unvarying patience. For years there had been nothing between them but this friendship, exacting, tormented, exclusive on the part of the artist, patient and almost maternal on the other's. There were other visitors more or less famous in their day, and some whose fame has endured. Sainte-Beuve once said to Solange while she was still a child, "It is well you are good, Mademoiselle, for you will never be beautiful." She used to tease him about this in after years. There was the beautiful Pauline Viardot, the famous singer, who was the original of Consuelo. Balzac came once, and Matthew Arnold has left a description of his visit in one of his charming essays.

One of the minor lions who came to Nohant when Solange was nineteen, was a young sculptor named Clésinger. George Sand's kind heart, and perhaps her vanity also, inclined her to play special providence to struggling artists. She asked Clésinger to stay at Nohant, and gave him a commission for busts of herself and Solange. The younger model was a handsome animated girl, with flowing locks and the look of a huntress Diana. She had just become engaged to a blameless young squire of the neighbourhood with whom she had been quite ready to think herself in love. But the wooing of Clésinger carried her off her feet, and before her mother had time to realise the danger, things had already gone too far to be stopped.

A girl who has been brought up to believe in the "rights of passion" may be pardoned for not seeing that her case ought to form an exception; but George Sand seems to have been wholly unprepared for this striking application of her own theories. Once realising, however, that the marriage was a necessity, she pushed it forward with all her might, praised the bridegroom to her friends, and declared herself perfectly satisfied.

But the pair once wedded, and her daughter's reputation saved, she did not attempt to conceal her vexation, and her dislike of the man that Solange had forced upon her as a son-in-law. If Clésinger had any idea of establishing himself at Nohant, he was at once undeceived. "My daughter," said Madame Sand, "shall be welcome to my home at any time. As for M. Clésinger, I do not know him."

The bride naturally took part with her husband. She had a short interview with her mother, of which George Sand writes:— "She was stiff and cold and not at all penitent. For the rest she is well, more beautiful than ever, and taking life as a collection of beings and things which must be scorned and braved."

A terrible disillusion awaited the beautiful defiant girl, so ignorant of life. Her sculptor, for whose sake she had jilted the young squire, estranged her mother, and deserted her home, turned out a coarse dissipated scoundrel, half crazy with vanity, extravagant and dishonest. The letters of Solange to Chopin during the first years of her marriage are filled with accounts of money-troubles. In December they were nearly ruined, and George Sand, who had settled her Paris property on Solange when she married, was herself in embarrassed circumstances and could do little to help them. In 1849 she began to make her daughter an allowance which was continued for the rest of her life.

In 1848 the birth of a little daughter brought about a reconciliation between Solange and her mother, and the correspondence between the two women was resumed. The letters of Solange give glimpses of an existence of rather precarious brilliance. Clésinger was the fashion both in London and Paris and was making money rapidly, and spending it even more rapidly. Solange amused herself well enough in the atmosphere of extravagant and wealthy Bohemianism into which she had married, but the coarse violence and bluster of her husband disgusted and wearied her. Sometimes a longing for her country home finds shy and whimsical expression in her letters.

This fine weather is miserable at Paris. It makes me as sad and cross as anything to see the sun and greenery in my Meissonier of a garden [an allusion to the diminutive size of Meissonier's pictures]. I go out on horseback at 7 a.m. to refresh my ideas, and find nothing in the Bois de Boulogne but dust, and idiots in nankeen pantaloons. I roll with Nini on

a green and red carpet, which in spite of my good will does not give me the illusion of a meadow enamelled with poppies. When I make Bébé [the dog] jump in my vast garden, she squashes my root of pink or knocks over my baby rose-tree. In short, I am the most unhappy woman in the five quarters of the globe, Oceana included.

She did make a visit to Nohant and took with her the baby Jeanne, or Nini as she was called, who at once wound herself round the heart of the grandmother ; but Clésinger, who was madly jealous of his wife, speedily recalled her.

George Sand must have felt, in considering the lot her child had made for herself, that it bore in some respects a striking resemblance to her own. She too had drawn a blank in the matrimonial lottery. She knew what snares and pitfalls surround the steps of a young, clever, and charming woman who despises her husband : she knew what in similar circumstances had saved her, not indeed from error or from sorrow, but from final shipwreck and hopeless degradation ; and so she bent all her powers to induce Solange to interest herself in the work that had saved her mother. It was her work, the business of literature, which had steadied her in days of passion, and in times of overwhelming trouble had reconciled her to life. So when Solange writes that she thinks of taking up literature as an occupation, her mother abounds in encouragement.

At your age one has already a great store in the mind. But it is vague because there is no form. When the power of form has come one is surprised to see what mental stores one has, and one discovers oneself after being long a stranger to oneself. Then one is angry with oneself for the time lost, and life does not seem long enough for all that we have to produce. With or without great talents, with or without profit of money, with or without reputation, is not this an immense result obtained—a victory over the ennui, the deceptions, the languors, and the griefs of life ? I never really began to live till the day when I had to work for a living.

This cry from the heart of the born artist, so strenuous and joyous, so sure of herself, roused no echo in the heart of Solange, whose talent was critical rather than creative, and who had not the energy and perseverance of her mother. George Sand has to chide her for what seems like wilful despondency.

You tell me that your husband loves you and everybody says so. Your Nini is charming and gets on well. You are not ugly, you are not stupid. You would be well in health if you would give yourself the trouble to be so. Thus, the greatest griefs of a woman you do not experience.

Solange retorts with the eternal cry of youth for its place in the sun. She cannot reconcile herself to her mistake.

One must absolutely be happy when one is young. Duty is a big word without meaning. Virtue is a big pretence. I have your love, my dearest, and Jeanne. But Jeanne is two years old, and you are sixty miles away. And meanwhile I am devoured with grief and I swallow my tears in a corner, ashamed of having the weakness to suffer and not knowing how to be silent.

In 1852 the troubles of the Clésinger household came to a climax, and Solange demanded a legal separation from her husband. The poor little child became a bone of contention between the two parents. George Sand managed to keep it with her at Nohant for a considerable time, and grew more and more attached to it. Nini was the first and perhaps the dearest of the "grandchildren of Nohant." But in 1854 Clésinger contrived to obtain the custody of his little daughter. Worn out by the anxieties of the suit with her husband still pending, and half broken-hearted by the loss of her child, Solange fell ill. In her sickness and trouble she received much kindness from a connection of her mother's, Gaston de Villeneuve. This good man introduced to Solange the Père Ravignan, one of the most famous directors of Paris, whose name occurs so frequently in Mrs. Craven's *RECIT D'UNE SŒUR*. Under his influence Solange for a time returned to religion. About the same time as she made her first communion she received the joyful news that the law-courts had decided in her favour, and that Madame Sand was to have the custody of the child. There followed a letter from her mother, which, considering the nature of George Sand's own religious beliefs, shows some large-mindedness.

What happiness, my daughter ! God will strengthen your faith. God has come to your help, and whatever religion one is of, one feels this aid when one seeks and implores it. You must come at once,—but with Jeanne. You must take her away from that horrid *pension*.

The two women were eagerly planning the future of their darling. Solange wishes her to be educated at the *Sacré Cœur*, and George Sand was not prepared to object.

I would rather [she said] Nini were brought up to believe in the Immaculate Conception than that she were educated to despise everything good, with the ladies whose history, true or false, Clésinger has told me.

He had a contempt even for the person with whom he placed his daughter. This is not reassuring.

But oh, irony of fate ! In the midst of their happy projects Nini fell ill. She could not be moved from the wretched house in which she had been placed by her father, whose control over her was now at an end. They hoped that she would soon be well enough to be taken away, but it was not to be. Only a little corpse was brought home to Nohant, and buried under the great yew near the tomb of Aurore de Saxe. Over the child's grave they placed a simple cross of marble with this inscription : *Jeanne-Gabrielle, daughter of Solange, born at Guillerville May 10, 1848, died at Paris in the night of January 13-14, 1855.*

George Sand mourned for the lovely child with the bitter sorrow of those who are growing old, and who feel that time can bring them no compensation for what it takes away. Yet her sorrow was as nothing to that of the child's mother. It seemed that the best hope of a dignified and useful career for Solange had disappeared with her little daughter ; henceforth the poor wild creature drifted on the waves of this troublesome world like a rudderless ship. She still turned to her mother for sympathy, of which she was greedy, and submitted, more or less patiently, to advice which she never took. She visited Nohant on various occasions between 1855 and 1861.

These [says M. Rocheblave] are the good moments of Solange, those in which the mother has least anxiety about her. But George Sand, whose life is burdened with work and obligations of all kinds, does not intend to be at the mercy of a sudden impulse, a whim, or a surprise. She chooses her moments, she fixes her dates, and sometimes her conditions. When Solange is at Nohant she is in her mother's house and not in her own ; she is invited, she does not invite herself. This is a precaution which George Sand considers indispensable. She wishes that Solange should earn the right to come to Nohant, that she should recognise, by an effort of conduct and character, the favour of being received there. The reasons of this maternal policy may be guessed, and we can only touch on them lightly. Enough to say that for a long time Nohant was a restraint on Solange, and the frequency or rarity of her apparitions there, after certain dates, form in some sort the barometer of her moral life.

Much had been done by the mother, and long years of forbearance passed, before she wrote this letter, giving up, as it seemed, a hopeless task.

I believe I have explained myself ten times on what I believe to be permitted in your situation, and what is not permitted in any situation.

But we have two such different points of view, and you have given me, from the beginning of your life, the *rôle* of responsibility without authority, which is an impossible situation. . . . You have heart, devotion, affection, more than most women. But fair Paris of Troy passes with his curly hair, and off you start for the land of flutes, ribbons, and bells, putting on the airs of a female Don Juan, and saying with bursts of laughter, "How stupid it was of me yesterday to be good and reasonable." I have sometimes said to myself: "I have brought her into the world, fed her, whipped, adored, scolded, spoiled, punished, pardoned her, and for all that, I do not know her in the least, and I can never understand or guess why she does such and such things, which to my mind are completely unreasonable."

Whatever can be said for herself, Solange says, in a pathetic little letter, written not very long after the loss of her child.

Then they say that I am committing follies at Paris when they see me with men and women of my own age at the theatre. It can hardly be otherwise, living as I do completely alone, without any kind of protection, near or far, and carrying with me a profound grief. It is quite simple that I should try to forget that I should exhaust my youth and health by intoxicating myself with noise and movement, and I am more to be pitied than blamed. People do not know how a woman weeps in the night when they see her amusing herself all the evening.

Thus Solange went her brilliant, wilful, reckless way, and George Sand remained in the old home with her dutiful son Maurice and his wife. Again little voices called her grandmamma, little arms clung again about her neck, and little feet pattered, as Nini's once had pattered, along the garden-walks. The long, full, busy life drew to its close in peace.

Solange Clésinger survived George Sand for twenty-three years. With all her adventures of sentiment and fancy, her mother had always been first, or all but first, in her affection, and it was in her mother's home, under the shadow of the trees of Nohant, that they laid her to rest at last. Only one other love beside ever had lasting dominion over that wild heart, and the memory of it is carved upon her tomb. The inscription runs as she devised it: *Gabrielle-Solange Clésinger, née Dudevant-Sand, mère de Jeanne.*

A MATTER OF BUSINESS

I.

MR. STEPHEN ALLISON entered the library with the pleasant expectation of being about to make himself comfortable. He had, alas, reached that age at which comfort appears more attractive than pleasure. Besides, he had been shooting all day, and, though he would never have confessed it, he was tired. There was a certain weakness about his knees, a stiffness about the small of his back, which had the same depressing effect upon him that the discovery of a grey hair would have upon a beauty at her glass. Decidedly, he told himself with a sigh, he was growing old.

The lamps had not been lit, but tea had been brought in, and his hostess was sitting on the long, low stool in front of the fire, absorbed in a book.

"I feel a heartless wretch, Mrs. Holton," said Allison plaintively, "but could you leave the heroine to her distress one moment, and give me my tea?"

"It is too sweet for anything," said Mrs. Holton abstractedly, as she tried to manipulate the tea-pot with one hand, and hold the book in the other.

"The novel, or the tea? If the latter, I won't have any, thank you. Gout is hereditary in my family."

"The novel, of course. I do know by this time that you only take one lump. Cake?"

"You go back to your story," said Mr. Allison, making himself comfortable, "and leave me to browse over the muffin-dish alone."

"It is hardly a story," said the lady with the modest pride of one found reading the book of the season. "It is the *LETTERS OF A WIFE*."

"Ah," said Mr. Allison, intent upon the muffin.

" You always say *ah*," said Mrs. Holton petulantly, " and you nearly always mean something nasty."

" Nasty ? I merely meant to endorse your criticism."

" Why, I rave about it. Don't you ?"

" You forget," sighed Allison. " I only take one lump."

Mrs. Holton did not reply directly. She was not fond of her guest. Conversation with him was apt to make her feel as if she were rehearsing a dialogue, and had forgotten her cue. She occupied herself in preparing an expression of opinion to deliver to her husband on his conduct in leaving her to entertain his guest.

" I suppose," she said slowly, after a pause, " that you mean the book is too sentimental."

" To reduce it to a personal equation, Mrs. Holton,—do you write letters of that description to Holton when he is away ?"

" He never is away," sighed Mrs. Holton, " unless he stays the night in town. Then he telegraphs for his dress-suit and I send him up a list of his things in the portmanteau. But we used to write each other letters," she added, brightening, " when we were engaged."

" Why, I thought you lived in the same street ?"

" So we did ; and George used to come and see me every evening. Then, after he left, I used to run upstairs and write, so that he got a letter at his office in the morning, and I got one from him, too."

" And were they——? No, no ! The question is withdrawn."

" The answer to that is," said his hostess, smiling, " that you should get engaged."

Allison left his table, and came nearer the fire. Mrs. Holton still kept her position, though it was now too dark to read. There was a little smile on her face which worried him. It could hardly have been conjured up by Holton and the dress-clothes ; he felt a vicious desire to say something to drive it away.

" I don't mind confessing," he said at length, " that I have never read the book."

" Oh, for shame ! Then all your abuse of it goes for nothing."

" I do not remember abusing it, but let that pass. I have no time to waste on novels."

" Of course it is a novel pure and simple—"

" I should hardly have applied those adjectives to the modern

novel, myself," murmured Allison, but his hostess's patience was getting rapidly exhausted.

"All I can say is," she cried as she rose to go, "I am glad I've read it, and my advice to you is to read it—or no;—get engaged first, and read it afterwards."

And with this parting shot she left the room.

II.

A few days later Allison returned to town. He had rooms in one of the many little streets leading off Bond Street, where he kept his belongings, and occasionally entertained a friend. His acquaintances he met at his club. For occupation he had a subordinate post at a Government Office. When it was fine he walked to his work in the morning; it was one way of keeping young. When it was wet he took a hansom. It was only lately that he had been able to afford a hansom, and he still enjoyed the sensation of hailing one. He was out nearly every evening, for his circle of acquaintance was large, and he had the reputation of being a clever talker. When he was disengaged he would go to a concert, or spend the evening at home, laboriously playing over any passage from a score which had struck his fancy. Men said he was a lucky fellow, who made abominably bad use of his money. Women said he ought to marry; Allison did not see the necessity.

The night after his return Stephen was in an evil frame of mind. The season having not yet begun, he had perforce to stay at home. Then his piano had not been tuned. Thirdly, the librarian at Mudie's had doubtless also been taking holiday, and Allison's book-list had got exchanged with that of someone else, who evidently had widely different views on literature. Allison gazed in speechless disgust at the offending pile of books, then he picked up each volume in turn between his finger and thumb, read the title, and dropped it as if it had been an obnoxious reptile.

The last book was an unpretending little production, bound in white, with fine gold lettering: *THE LETTERS OF A WIFE*, by Nina Henry.

It was probably the recollection of the little scene in the library which made Allison look at this longer than the others. His lips

twitched into a smile as he thought of the little woman on the hearth-rug. Why had the book so fascinated her? Well, the evening was already wasted, he would read and see.

The plot was simple. A young naval officer called away on duty leaves his three months' bride behind with his own people. The writer tries, not very successfully, to trace the gradual sapping of the girl's affection by the separation, and the countless petty worries of her life. It was obviously the author's first attempt at novel-writing, and, as I have said, not an entirely successful one. But even Allison had to acknowledge that the book had a certain charm. It lay in the self-revelation of the girl in her first few letters. He read these, skimmed the rest of the book, found it, as he had expected, dull, turned back and read the first again. Her gaiety, her pride in her love, her cheerfulness, her sense of humour,—it was all delightful. He went to bed with the girl's voice ringing in his ears.

The infatuation lasted a week. During this time he dreamed of Nina Henry, talked of Nina Henry, lived for Nina Henry. Then the reaction came. The reality faced him suddenly, and stunned him as if he had run against a wall. This girl,—what was she to him? Nothing; he was not even sure that the name he knew her by was her own. And the letters were not written for him, were not even written for love, but for money.

For money! Well, he had money. The idea followed his train of thought so naturally that at first he did not perceive the extent of its suggestion. Then its simplicity overwhelmed him. He had money; and though money cannot buy love, yet it can buy love-letters, and Allison did not want more. He was perfectly willing to have his emotion without paying the penalty. He would have his love-letters, but no lover.

The way was easy. Allison wrote a letter to Miss Henry, to the care of her publishers, and offered her advantageous terms if she would write to him once a week. The money would be paid through his bankers, and would begin on receipt of the first letter. She might assign to him and to herself any character she pleased, only he stipulated that for the purposes of the correspondence she should be engaged to him.

On the Monday morning a letter in an unfamiliar hand lay on his plate. He picked it up, and broke the seal. He was a young man again, a lover with the world before him, and a maiden waiting him, waiting in a little Devonshire vicarage

cuddled under the slope of the down for Donald to make his fortune and come back to her.

"Do you know," she said, "that it is six months to-day since you went away? And six months to-day the first blossom came out on the cherry-tree. Father was so pleased that I remembered the date. He thinks I may make a naturalist yet. But I knew, because I picked it when I went to meet you at the gate in the cherry-orchard, and you—Don, dear, do you remember? If you do not, I shall break my heart, but I shall never tell you."

Mr Allison put down the letter, and stroked his moustache. Then he finished reading it, and put it in his breast-pocket. He was an engaged man, and,—yes,—he liked the feeling; a little sheepish, perhaps, but that did not matter, as happily he did not have to run the gauntlet of his friends' congratulations. That morning, when docketing some memoranda, his face was suddenly illuminated with a brilliant smile.

"Now I wonder," he said to himself, as he tied the bundle neatly with a piece of pink tape, "what it was I did in the cherry-orchard?"

III.

The letters came regularly. Every Monday the last epistle retired from the breast-pocket in favour of the new comer. A little packet in Allison's drawer began to swell. The official habit was too strong within him to admit of his doing anything but docket his precious possessions. Be it said, however, he did not use red tape. He bought a piece of pale blue ribbon at a haberdasher's. He liked to think that she had given it to him; she always wore pale blue.

One evening in March Allison met Mrs. Holton at a dinner. He had not seen her since she had sat on the hearth-stool and recommended him to get engaged.

"Do you know," she said, "you are looking very well?"

"I was about to say the same to you," he replied, "but a *tu quoque* compliment is always open to suspicion. I don't know why, I'm sure, for it is quite within the bounds of probability that we are both looking very well this weather."

"In the Spring a young man's fancy," quoted Mrs. Holton, looking up under her eyelashes.

"Ah; that does not apply to me, I am afraid."

"It applies to everyone now-a-days. Youth is a knack which can be acquired. It is merely the habit of looking forward ; only age looks back."

"And middle age is left the present," said Allison, surveying the dinner-table. "Well, I don't object to the present. By the bye, where is Holton ?"

"George is at home, waging war with the plumbers. I slipped away for a day, succumbed to the fascinations of London, and stayed on."

"And reversing the usual order of things, I suppose George sends you up a portmanteau with a list of your evening clothes ?"

"No, the maid does that," said Mrs. Holton literally ; then she laughed. "What a memory you have ! Did you ever read that book ?"

"You forget you imposed another condition first."

"Then you never did. Well, it is too late ; no one ever talks about it now. Poor thing !" sighed Mrs. Holton. "I heard the other day from someone who knows somebody who really knows all about her, and she leads a miserable life with a drunken brute of a husband and six children."

The lady broke off to help herself to some dish, and appeared to forget her subject. Allison did not remind her ; he turned his attention to his other neighbour, and soon afterwards the conversation became general. After dinner he pleaded another engagement, and left early, but he went straight home. When there, he wished he had not returned, the room was so dreary. He tried to play, but it was no good. He tried to read his latest letter, but the six children rose, phantom-like, between his eyes and the page. Six children ! It was monstrous, impossible ; and a drunken husband. One should only believe half one hears. If you granted the husband, the probability was against his drinking. Well, in any case the correspondence must cease. He wrote at once.

MADAM,—It was agreed that your engagement should close at a month's notice. I therefore beg that your letters may be discontinued after April 1st.

Yours faithfully.

Allison read the letter through. It seemed rather a brutal termination to an idyll. He ought to mention what a pleasure

her letters had been to him. He set out to mention it, and the result was an ardent love-letter. Allison was appalled when he read it over. How simple these things sound when spoken ; and how remarkably compromising they look on paper. Yes, it would be easier done by word of mouth. He wrote a short note, asking Miss Henry for an interview.

By return of post came Miss Henry's reply. She regretted that she was unable to see him, and also that she would no longer be able to continue her weekly letters. The object of the interview being accomplished, Allison should have been satisfied, but he was not. He wrote again, entreating her to see him. Something of his emotion may have found its way into his last letter, for a little agitation was visible in the lady's reply.

"Do not ask to see me," she wrote. "Indeed I am very different from what you think me ; it would be better for us not to meet."

Different ! Allison walked down Whitehall that morning in a dream. Was it as Mrs. Holton had said, that she was unhappy ? It might be ; or was it that she felt herself plain, elderly, and dull, and feared to disillusion him ? But dull she could not be. An elderly woman would surely have been amused rather than agitated by the transaction ; and what if she were plain ? "If she had sandy hair and a squint," cried Mr. Allison to himself, as he stopped short in the middle of a crowded crossing, "I should love her. Love her !" he repeated aloud, gazing into the face of a straining cab-horse, whom its driver was vainly trying to back. But the cab-horse had no interest in the matter, and knocked him down.

IV.

Allison lingered some weeks. His injuries were internal, and from the first the doctor gave no hope. His acquaintances were sympathetic, and sent him daily offerings of fruit and flowers. A few of the braver type came in to see him, and brought him comic papers. An elderly maiden aunt arrived, took possession of the case, and quarrelled with the professional nurse. The nurse complained to the doctor. "Try and bear with it," advised the latter ; "it is not for so very long," and he went in to see the patient.

"How long?" enquired the patient from the bed.

"My dear sir, we'll have you up and about before the summer's out."

"If you want to tell lies in here, doctor, you should be careful to have the door shut before you speak the truth outside it. Come, how long?" And the doctor told the truth.

When he had gone, Allison asked for a pencil, and spent the evening scrawling some words on a piece of paper. The nurse addressed it for him rather haughtily. She did not think much of writing-women.

"One more day," said the doctor, and then again "one more."

Still Allison lingered on. "It's my belief," said the nurse, "that the man is waiting for something." One picks up many little superstitions in the hospital wards. The doctor shrugged his shoulders, but he did not contradict her.

That afternoon the nurse on duty came to Allison as he woke from a morphia sleep. "There is a gentleman in the next room," she said, "who says that you have asked to see him. His name is Eldry"—Allison shook his head—"but he told me to tell you his name was Henry. Now, Mr. Allison, you cannot see anyone if it excites you like that."

"Show him in," gasped Allison. Oh, queen of prudes, to send her husband at the last!

The new comer did not look a drunkard, and so far Mrs. Holton's story seemed to be at fault. He was a tall, thin man in a shabby coat, with a refined, soft-bearded face, the face of a dreamer, not that of a successful man. He advanced to the end of the bed, and stopped, gazing in nervous distress at the figure in it.

Allison was the first to break the silence. "Well," he said bitterly, "am I so dangerous? You might have let her come."

Eldry wrung his hands together nervously. "It was a mistake," he said, "a bitter mistake. I felt it from the first when I began—"

"You? You began?"

"I wrote the letters. Yes, I am Nina Henry."

He did not look up as he spoke. When he raised his eyes the face on the pillow was as impassive as ever.

"Ah," said Allison after a little pause, "ah. Pray don't let me detain you. I believe my banker has settled your account. Good-afternoon."

Eldry shambled to the door, then turned, and by a sudden impulse came up to the side of the dying man. "I should like to tell you," he began hurriedly, "what a pleasure it has been to me. Don't think I did it for the money—it was not that. I liked to do it. I believe I live in dreams. My profession is a sordid one; I get little pleasure from it, and I have many cares at home, though my wife is a good woman." He broke off with a half laugh. "I declare that I live in such a haze that when she goes from home I find myself expecting her to write those letters to me."

Allison turned slightly on his pillow and looked with a faint interest at the speaker. "Ah," he said slowly; "and does she?"

"No."

The dim eyes lit up with a faint amusement, the compressed lips twitched into one of his rare smiles. "Ah," he said, and then after a pause added, "Stay."

V.

"Very sad case," said the doctor, "very sad! Cut off in the prime of life! May I ask if you are any relation?"

"No, no connection," said Eldry mechanically.

"Old friends only?" said the doctor.

He spoke for the sake of making conversation, but Eldry misunderstood him and thought that his position was being questioned. "I fear I am hardly even that," he said nervously, as he prepared to take his departure. "The fact is," he added in one of those embarrassing bursts of confidence indulged in by nervous people, "there was but one tie between us; we both loved the same woman."

"My dear sir, I quite understand," said the doctor impressively; "good-evening."

A few minutes later, as Eldry crossed the street and stopped to look up at a darkened window, he wondered to himself with a little smile, how much the doctor understood. But after all, it came very near the truth, though perhaps Mrs. Eldry would not have liked one to say so.

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